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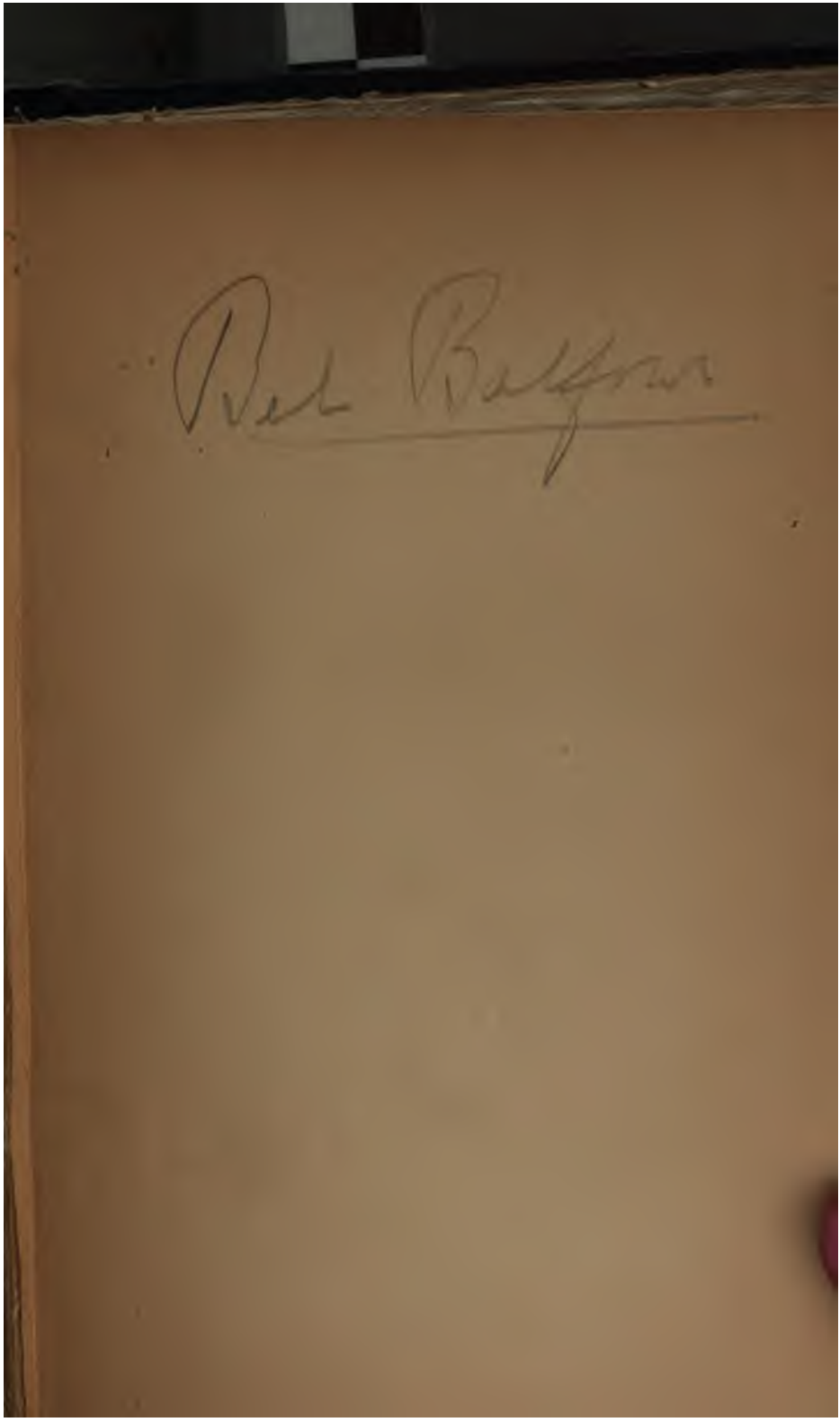
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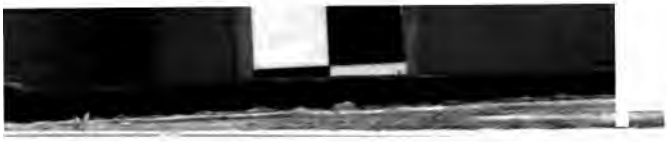




TOM TUG AND OTHERS

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Frontispiece.



TOM TUG AND OTHERS

SKETCHES
IN A DOMESTIC MENAGERIE

BY

MRS. DEW-SMITH

AUTHOR OF 'CONFIDENCES OF AN AMATEUR GARDENER,'
'THE WHITE UMBRELLA,' ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
ELINOR M. MONSELL

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TOM TUG AND OTHERS

SKETCHES IN A DOMESTIC MENAGERIE

I

TOM TUG

For sweetness of temper and general amiability of disposition give me the domestic bull-dog. And as a contrast to his large amiability, to show it, as it were, in relief, give him as a companion a sharp little dog called a Schipperke. The two together make an amusing and interesting pair.

I believe my two dogs, Tom Tug the bull-dog, and Abel the Schipperke, are fair specimens of their class. They are as great a contrast in appearance as in character. Tom Tug, with his brindled coat, fitting rather tightly behind, his white collar, and light waistcoat, with a suggestion of a hard felt hat about his head, might be suspected of frequenting the "turf." The Schipperke, dressed in black from head to foot, looks like a very small curate, bent on reforming Tom Tug. The resemblance in each case is, however, only skin-deep.

Tom Tug's chief characteristics are amiability, affection, laziness and love of comfort, especially warmth; sense of humour, lying, and obstinacy. Not much to pride himself on, perhaps, if taken separately, but they make a singularly attractive whole. This is due, perhaps, more to the fact that he is hewn on a large and generous scale as to his character, and is entirely free from pettiness, than to the intrinsic value of the qualities themselves. His amiability and affection are of the widely tolerant and indiscriminate sort, embracing every one; his laziness and love of comfort are profound; his sense of humour is ponderous; he lies heavily and thoroughly; and his obstinacy is of the kind that lives in the bones.

I have never known so thoroughly amiable a dog. You may tease him by the hour without causing him to lose his temper. You may pull his screw tail, rub his nose the wrong way, take away his favourite bone, and stick pins in him without fear of his snapping. You may put your hand right inside his great mouth, and he will nibble you as gently as a sucking dove. He has the dog's usual dislike of shabbiness and rags, and has barred the entrance to many a tramp by simply standing and looking at him. But I have never known him show anything more aggressive than a forbidding attitude—an

attitude he keeps up till he has seen the stranger safely off the premises—even to a tramp. To the ordinary decently-dressed visitor he is nothing but gentleness; he greets him with an insinuating waggle of his body, nibbles the tips of his fingers if he will allow him, and gives him to understand that he considers him a particularly delightful specimen of his kind. Sometimes they take credit to themselves, and look upon him as a dog of unusual discrimination. But I, who have seen Tom Tug with many visitors, have never been able to detect the slightest variety in his greeting, nor indeed anything which would lead me to suppose that he knows one from another. As a puppy his greeting of visitors used to be somewhat tempestuous. He would rush in at the door and on to their laps with a bound, and lick their faces all over before they had got over their first gasp of surprise.

Though somewhat indiscriminate in his behaviour towards visitors, he distinguishes sharply between the members of his own family and the outside world. As he grows older he becomes more inarticulate and less given to expressing his feelings, but he shows a greater disposition to cling to his friends. He asks nothing better than to be allowed to follow me wherever I go. He will laboriously climb the stairs after me, lie on the floor, and eye me while I put on

my things, flop down-stairs after me again, look at me with unutterable reproach if I shut the gate upon him and leave him behind, and watch with stolid patience for my return.

Tom's principal amusement is "chawing" things. It is the principal amusement of most puppies, but Tom bids fair to carry it on into middle-age. As a puppy he chawed his way through a small fortune, including a valuable lace shawl, a Bellows' Dictionary (first edition, with the delightful definition of "piquette"), the piano-tuner's hat, innumerable pairs of gloves, and several pairs of boots. Repeated corrections have impressed upon him the desirability of discriminating in his chawing, and he now chaws chiefly what may fairly be considered rubbish—anything he happens to pick up, and which from the fact of its lying about is presumably of no use to any one else. He is particularly fond of wooden match-ends, and has chawed up enough in his life-time to keep a small family in firewood. He chews more grass than any dog I have ever known, more because he likes it, I feel sure, than for medicinal purposes.

I imagine he derives much the same satisfaction from chewing rubbish that a sailor does from chewing tobacco. For he is absolutely without greediness, and cares very little for food unless he is positively hungry. He will sit in the room while we are



having dinner, quite indifferent to savoury odours that drive the Schipperke crazy. Sometimes at breakfast they sit side by side and receive scraps of toast and other delicacies in turn. The Schipperke is so eager for these tit-bits that he sits quivering with excitement, while his eyes look as if they were going to fly out of his head. But I have seen Tom Tug go to sleep with his chin in the air while waiting for the next bit.

He would not be a dog if he did not love bones. But, as far as I have observed, size and shape appeal to him more than nutritive qualities, and I think he looks upon them more as things to gnaw than as food. He has a large collection of bones that he keeps hidden in different parts of the garden for his leisure moments. He hides them in the bushes, and finds them again after many days. Apparently, on each re-appearance they have the charm of novelty. His choicest bones he keeps in his barrel.

Once he caught me burying his favourite bone. I had taken advantage of his back being turned to seize it. I had dug a deep hole and was about to put the bone in when I heard a sort of sigh at my elbow, and looking round saw that he was watching me. He took no steps to interfere with the proceeding, but he looked unutterable things. Whether it was pride or

indifference I do not know, but he never attempted to dig it up.

If he has a weakness in the way of food it is for garden produce, and he prefers to pick it himself. During the summer he frequently finds his way to the kitchen garden and pulls green peas off the rows and eats them, shells and all. He discovered that they were good to eat one day when watching me gathering them, and apparently made a note of it. He helps himself to gooseberries too, but in a very gingerly way, for he dislikes having his nose pricked. And so great is his love for strawberries that if they were not carefully netted I am sure we should not have one left.

I have never known a dog who could put so much into a look as Tom Tug can. He will sit sometimes for a quarter of an hour with his head drooping between his shoulders, looking at one from under his heavy brows, as if he were trying to look into one's soul. After one of these prolonged looks he will sometimes turn away with a short sigh, as if he gave it up. He became very much attached to a parlour-maid we had once, and would sit for hours in the pantry watching her polish the spoons. I asked her one day what he did there.

"Oh, he doesn't do anything," she answered, "but he *looks!*"

When he was a puppy, if you tried by whistling to divert his attention when he was engaged in looking in this way, he would twist his head nearly upside down, first in one direction and then in the other, in order to get his ears into the best possible position for sampling the strange sound.

I believe that outside his own family circle Tom Tug is considered plain, not to say ugly. I gather this from the remarks of the passers-by, especially of the school-children, rather than from any direct information on the subject.

"Oh, jes' look at that ole dawg!" is a frequent exclamation on the part of the school-children. "Oh, ain't 'e a beauty!"

Tom eyes them with ineffable contempt. If he attempts to go near them, they run from him with affected screams of terror. I confess I think him beautiful. There is a benevolent expression in his heavy, wrinkled brow, and a soulful look in his dark brown eye (set in milky white), that I should have thought would prevent any one thinking him plain. His lower jaw does not protrude as much as is usual in bull-dogs. But occasionally it does so enough to disclose two tiny white teeth—to my mind the most touching feature he possesses.

Tom Tug's pet plaything is a small indiarubber ball, the possession of which he will dispute with the

Schipperke from morn till eve. I have often wondered wherein lies its charm. It is an ordinary little indiarubber ball, known as an indestructible dog-ball, and may be purchased at an indiarubber shop for from one to two shillings. It used to be made of pure indiarubber, so that dogs might bite and bite without destroying it. But owing, I am told, to the amount of indiarubber consumed by bicycles the dog-ball is no longer what it was. I have known a dog-ball handed down from one generation of dogs to another, like an heirloom, and not show, at the end of years, the mark of a single tooth. But of late years I have not been able to find one which a puppy could not destroy in a week, if he put his mind to it. With care, however, I have made them last a month or two. The one which the dogs have at present was bought only a month ago, and is still in a fair state of preservation. The esteem in which they hold this ball, and the passion with which they desire it, can only be accounted for by the supposition that there is more in it than meets the human eye. The mere sight of it produces in the Schipperke a state which can only be described as hysterical ecstasy. Every fibre of his body thrills with excitement, and little yelps escape him at every minute. Tom Tug being phlegmatic in temperament, his emotion is not quite so apparent. But no one who observes him closely can doubt that

the ball possesses some hidden virtue which makes it deliriously desirable. When he has obtained possession of it he settles himself on the ground, and with chin in the air and closed eyes, proceeds to "chaw" it. From the expression of ineffable bliss that he has when thus engaged I imagine he is extracting the hidden virtue.

Though I can detect not the faintest odour about the indiarubber ball, for both dogs it is apparently redolent of perfume. They will trace it with unerring precision if thrown into a thick undergrowth of shrubs and weeds, and if hidden under one of a row of earthenware flower-pots turned upside down will rapidly smell through the holes and pounce without hesitation on the one which contains it. It seems even to possess some sort of magnetic attraction for them, so that they know when it is in the room, as certain persons are aware of the presence of cats. I have seen the Schipperke start up, when apparently asleep on the rug, as if a sudden conviction had come to him that the ball was in the room. He would proceed to walk round the room sniffing the air, stand on his hind legs to examine the tables and shelves, and, finally tracking it to the chimney-piece, sit beneath it looking up, whining and quivering with excitement till it was given to him.

The Schipperke's whole aim and object is to induce

you to throw the ball as far as you can across the lawn. He then runs after it with all his might and brings it back. That is all he does, but a world of delight seems to be contained in that run. If he could induce any one to go on throwing it, I believe he would run after it all day long. I once tried to see how long he would keep it up. At the end of an hour, when I was so exhausted that I could throw no more, he was as fresh and eager as he had been at the beginning. When he brings the ball back an amusing little struggle goes on between his desire to keep it and his wish that you should throw it again. He drops it at your feet, then picks it up with a squeal; drops it again, and betrays an engaging vacillation for a few moments before he decides in favour of having it thrown again.

Tom Tug prefers that the Schipperke should do the running. He contents himself, as a rule, with waiting for his return and wresting the ball unceremoniously from between his teeth—a proceeding which the Schipperke naturally resents. Having once or twice been taken by surprise, he now contrives by rapid dodging of his head, accompanied by fierce snarls, to keep Tom at bay till he can land his prize in safety.

The bull-dog is to be found in every walk of life. And it is to his credit that whatever his surroundings



he incorporates himself so thoroughly with them that it is difficult to picture him in any other. Attached to a prince, he is a well-bred gentleman, with the dignified ease and manner that is the result of blue blood and association with royalty. Accompanying the burglar, he is a thoroughgoing villain. He smokes a clay, and spends most of his time lounging in a bar-parlour. But, whatever his station, he takes kindly to domesticity, and appreciates thoroughly all its comforts.

Though Tom Tug would resent the suggestion that the modest comfort of his own home was not all that a bull-dog could desire, from his love of fur rugs, soft cushions, and warmth, I suspect that, other things being equal, he would prefer to dwell in marble halls, well cushioned and heated throughout with blazing fires, and to take his exercise in a fur-lined brougham. His idea of happiness is to lie on a thick fur rug in front of a blazing fire with his chin resting on the fender. It must seem to him mere perversity that he is not allowed to occupy this position whenever he likes, but is condemned to a round dog-basket, on one side of the hearthrug, where he is beyond the direct rays of the fire.

His love of warmth and the very thin coat he is provided with by nature suggested clothes. And last winter I went so far as to make him a neat coat of

blue cloth with "T.T." embroidered in the corner. For some reason he did not like it. Dogs are sensitive to ridicule, and perhaps it was that the other dogs laughed at him when he went for a walk. The Schipperke never ceased jeering at it when he had it on. Or perhaps it was that it incommoded his movements by catching in things. But whatever the reason, he submitted to having it put on with evident distaste, and showed signs of relief when it was taken off; and one day he apparently made up his mind he would stand it no longer, and, taking it from a table near his barrel, where it lay neatly folded, he tore it to bits. I wish I could transfer to paper his look when he was caught in the act. There was a mixture of defiance, apology, reproach, and sly humour in it that no eyes but those of a bull-dog are capable of expressing.

Tom Tug loves his barrel. The day on which he entered into possession was an epoch in his life. I feel sure that, looked at from the standpoint of the barrel, the world since that day has assumed a different hue in his eyes. It is a particularly nice barrel, and before it attained to the dignity of a house for Tom, had brought grapes packed in sawdust from foreign parts. It is large enough to admit of his lying in any position, full length or curled up, and there is plenty of room in it for him to keep things



.—things that he picks up: bits of sticks, string, stones, biscuits, and bones—things in fact which, if he were a human boy, he would keep in his trousers pocket. The barrel rests on wooden supports to keep it steady, and there is a board across the opening at the bottom which answers the double purpose of keeping the straw in and giving him something to rest his chin on when he wishes to look out and see what is going on in the world. Clean straw once a week completes his sum of bliss.

I must confess that Tom Tug is the laziest dog I have ever known. He goes to bed at nine, and if he had his own way would not get up till ten. Besides sleeping the clock round, he frequently goes to bed in the middle of the day and sleeps for an hour or so. I have known him, when feeling bored, spend most of the day in bed.

The Schipperke cannot understand any one staying in bed one minute longer than he is obliged. If he had his way every one should be up at sunrise. As soon as there is a stir in the house he is awake and all alive listening. When the front door is open he is out of the house and in the garden with a bound. He looks to see what sort of day it is going to be, and then rushes in to wake Tom. The awakening of Tom lasts about a quarter of an hour and is a sight to see. He yawns as if he wanted to swallow the

house. He stretches and blinks and shakes himself and makes the most unearthly noises. He walks along with his front legs, leaving his hind legs behind till he has stretched himself to his greatest possible length. Then he yawns again, till one's jaws positively ache from sympathy, and, getting back into his barrel, subsides once more into the straw. The Schipperke is frequently obliged to come in five or six times before he succeeds in getting him out into the garden. Once out, he catches a little animation from the Schipperke, and runs about quite energetically, investigating everything. Doubtless, like human beings, when they taste the early morning air but seldom, he wonders why he does not get up early every morning of his life.



II

ABEL

THE Schipperke is about the size of a small fox-terrier. He has sharp-pointed, upright ears, a sharp nose, dark brown, very bright eyes, and elegant little legs and paws. His coat is thicker and a little rougher than that of a fox-terrier, and as black as soot. It is his pride and ours that there is not a single white hair to be found in it. He does not boast the vestige of a tail. This gives him, when seen from behind, the appearance of a little black bear, especially when he is standing on his hind legs to investigate something with his sharp little nose.

The origin of his taillessness is, I am told, as follows. The original Schipperke was a native of Belgium and the Low Countries, where he was chiefly employed as a barge dog. That is to say, he used to sit on his tail on the barge as it glided through the canals, and let every one know that he was there

to protect it and look after his master's interests. If any one attempted to board the barge without leave he found he had a determined little gatekeeper to deal with, for the Schipperke was little but fierce. Continual sitting upon his tail as guardian of the barge is said to have worn it off. Consequently his descendant, the modern Schipperke, has no tail.

We bought our Schipperke for a large sum, considering his size, when he was about a month old. And he arrived one morning in a basket with a neatly written out pedigree by way of a letter of introduction. He was the most mournful looking puppy I have ever seen; and was in appearance more like a tiny black pig than a puppy-dog. Tom Tug, the bull-dog, was at the time a clumsy, loose-limbed puppy of about six months old, and was given to wild fits of boisterous high spirits. The arrival of the Schipperke was the signal for one of these. The sight of the small black animal, sitting mournfully on the lawn where we had deposited him out of the basket seemed to intoxicate him. Having been brought up on the bottle himself, it is possible that he had never seen a puppy before. He certainly appeared to think the Schipperke the most fascinating object he had ever seen. After a few excited sniffs and ecstatic waggles, in which he apparently made an effort to control his emotion, he suddenly cast all



restraints to the wind, and indulged in a fit of hysterical delight, mingled with blandishments apparently designed to beguile the Schipperke. He tore round and round the lawn at full speed with his tail between his legs, and then prostrated himself coaxingly on his front paws before the little black pig, who gazed at him sorrowfully and quite unmoved. Then he made a pounce at him, licked him all over, and tore off again. Returning to the charge, he rolled on his back and kicked all his legs in the air in the most engaging manner, and prostrated himself again. In short, he made a perfect fool of himself. And all to no purpose. His blandishments did not produce one sympathetic gleam from the Schipperke's eye. He sat there unmoved—mournfully surprised that any creature should indulge in such an exhibition of folly.

We were in doubt as to what to call the new puppy; but finally, partly because of his mournful expression, partly because of his fancied resemblance to a friend of that name, settled on "Abel." It has proved an inconvenient and inappropriate name. Inconvenient, because it is a difficult name to call loudly and peremptorily. And Abel's idiosyncracies necessitate his being frequently called both loudly and peremptorily. And inappropriate because mournfulness is by no means characteristic of him ; and was,

indeed, but the immediate effect of having taken a long railway journey shut up in a basket. It wore off in an hour, and Abel began to show himself a fierce, lively, high-spirited little dog, with a tendency to wage war against the restraints of civilization, and a determination to go his own way, and choose his own friends that made him difficult to manage.

Unlike Tom Tug, whose amiability leads him to treat every one (except the unmistakable tramp) with gentle affability, Abel is extremely distrustful, and approaches every one with suspicion. Until he has submitted you to a careful scrutiny, he keeps you, morally speaking, at a distance, and is inclined to hold you for an enemy, till he is quite satisfied that you are a friend. Whereas Tom Tug's greeting consists of licks and nibbles expressive of "I am *so* glad to see you," and like sentiments, Abel's consists of sniffs and snorts, indicative of a desire that you should at once state who you are and what your business is. Once he sees fit to bestow his affection, however, he is capable of a devotion as deep and exclusive as Tom Tug's is wide and indiscriminate. Only his friends must be of his own, not of your choosing.

His first love was Marianne. She looked after him when he was a puppy ; fed him, brushed him, put him to bed, whipped him when necessary, and, generally speaking, brought him up. And he repaid



these attentions with absolute devotion, counting every one else as dust compared with Marianne. I confess I found this devotion a little exasperating at times. For if I offended him, or even bored him, or if I ventured to scold him, or attempted to chastise him, he would immediately turn round, no matter where he happened to be—even when out for a walk —and run back to Marianne as hard as he could. And the louder I called, the faster he ran.

When he was about three months old, Marianne went away. After six months she came back to pay us a visit. Abel was at that time recovering from the distemper and confined to the greenhouse. I happened to pass the greenhouse, and hearing him squeaking and yelping as if he had gone mad, looked in to see what was the matter. He was weeping with joy over the return of Marianne. She was kneeling on the ground, and they were hugging each other. Abel standing on tip-toe, with his ears back, was waggling all over, licking her face and howling and yelping. And Marianne was "crooning" over him as if he were a baby. I felt it would be indelicate to intrude on such a scene, so shut the door quietly and withdrew.

Whether it was to console himself for Marianne's absence or merely to assert his independence, I do not know; but it was after she left that he took to going

down the village on business, which he divulged to no one. From the regularity and punctuality with which he started off—frequently getting up and running off as if he had suddenly remembered an appointment—I suspected him of having joined a dog club. That dogs have clubs where they meet other dogs, discuss bones of contention, and occasionally indulge in trials of strength, all who have observed the ways of dogs are aware.

As a rule, dog clubs are disreputable resorts frequented only by rowdy dogs of low degree. I happened to know one, however, of undoubted respectability, where well-bred and well-behaved dogs consorted for social purposes. Indeed, I was credibly informed that "The Jolly Dog Club" was one to which any gentlemanly dog might belong without risking a slur on his reputation. And that the members were without exception dogs of high degree and irreproachable manners.

Consequently, when I found that Abel had taken to slipping off to the village, presumably to associate with dogs I knew nothing about, I determined, by way of a counter-attraction, to arrange a meeting between him and some of the members of the Jolly Dog Club—to wit, a dachshund called Max—an amiable fellow, with the air of a German baron; a jocose little Aberdeen terrier called Whisk, and an



Irish terrier called Pat, who was, I was told, rather fond of a row. These three and some half-dozen other dogs formed the club, which met at a mound of earth in a field close by. The selectness of the club was vouched for. Indeed, I was told that only lately a quarrelsome fox-terrier had been ejected by the dachshund, aided by the Irish terrier, and that he had not dared to show his face there since, but had to content himself with passing it by in the distance with tail erect, and hair in a ridge along his back, growling vindictively.

I may say at once that my effort to enrol Abel as a member of this high-toned club met with no success. The three dogs were inclined to treat him affably, but he met their overtures with sniffs and snorts of suspicion, and after a few minutes took up his position at my feet, in the verandah, with his hind leg stretched out and his front paws crossed (a favourite attitude), paying not the slightest attention to their friendly invitation to walk round the garden.

As for the three dogs, they obviously thought him a muff.

III

TOM JONES

I HAVE always believed firmly in the good luck that attaches to black cats. When in my walks abroad I chance to meet a black cat sitting on a doorstep, looking out of a window, or, better still, coming to meet me, my step at once becomes buoyant with hope, for I know that Good Luck is about to "alight on my roof." Consequently, when I heard that for a week William had been waging war against one of these harbingers of happiness, a very large black cat, which had persisted in coming into the garden every day with a view, it is to be presumed, of taking up his abode there, and that by dint of chasing it with the garden broom, and turning the garden hose on it, he had at last persuaded it to discontinue its visits, I felt extremely annoyed at such perverse and foolish behaviour on the part of William. I told him that such treatment of a friendly visitor



was not only churlish and unamiable, but quite likely to bring about its own reward in the shape of some calamity or disaster; and that if such a consequence did not follow swiftly we might at least be sure that Fortune had meditated bestowing an unexpected plum upon us which, thanks to him, we should now have to go without.

Indeed, for a day or two I went in fear of the evil consequences that I felt convinced were sure to follow such conduct. On the third day, however, I had the good fortune to sit down by the merest accident on the most enormous black cat—an accident which I felt at once amply counteracted the effect of William's folly.

It is of the greatest importance in an omen that it should be unexpected. Good Luck is not a thing to be sought and captured. He comes when he likes and goes when he likes, and his omens are marked by the same capriciousness. Nothing could have been more unexpected than my sitting on the cat—at least to me. Whether it was as unexpected to the cat I cannot say, but as the cat was in the habit of sitting in that chair, and as it was also the most obvious chair for the visitor to sit in, I think not.

It was an attractive-looking little chair. I noticed it as soon as I entered the room (I was paying an afternoon call). "What a nice little chair!" I said to myself. And I went and sat down in it. After

I had sat for a second or two I felt that there was something unusual about the shape of the cushion. It felt as if it were doubled up beneath me. I got up to readjust it, and found instead of a cushion a large black cat! It looked up at me lazily, without the least touch of resentment, stretched out a long, indolent, black furry paw, and withdrew it again, but showed not the least inclination to move. He was a splendid fellow, with long silky fur, as black as soot, and without a sign of white. His tail, that curled gracefully over his legs, was a magnificent brush, and between his toes and in his ears was the thick fur that in cats is a sign of aristocratic descent. I stooped down and stroked him. He acknowledged the caress by beginning to purr gently. Then he stretched himself again till his claws showed through the black velvet—withdrew them again, curled himself round more snugly in the chair, and seemed to invite me to sit down again.

To sit down on a black cat by accident was, I felt, a thing to congratulate oneself on. But to sit down upon it in cold blood was quite another thing. As I was determined to sit in the chair myself there was nothing to do but to evict the cat. This I proceeded to do. I picked it up. It was deliciously soft, and hung in my arms like a loose fur rug. I put it on the hearthrug, and seated myself in the chair. Even



this treatment it did not seem to resent. It walked a few steps away from me rather majestically, stretched itself again—this time with an air of wishing to show off, arching its back like a house-top cat in a picture—turned round and looked at me, sprang lightly on to my knee, and sank slowly into my lap like a very light fur mat.

As I gazed down at it I felt as if I were looking straight into Good Luck's eyes, and drawing from them deep draughts of good things to come. I was interrupted by the entry of my hostess. "Oh, that dreadful cat!" she cried, as, trying to cling to my precious bundle, I rose to shake hands with her. "Let me put him out. He is moulting dreadfully, and will cover you with hairs." Before I had time to protest she had taken him from me with scant ceremony, and, throwing him out on to the passage, had shut the door; and coming back began to overwhelm me with polite commonplaces. I took an instant aversion to her. To have my luck thus peremptorily chased from me was, indeed, almost more than my equanimity could stand.

It was extremely unlikely, I thought, that after being twice chased from my door, Good Luck would again attempt to visit me in the form of a black cat. He showed a delightful persistence, however, and came once more in the person of Jones.

We were at dinner when Jones arrived. The maid brought him in, saying that William had found him under the walnut-tree. His first appearance reminded me of a story in that delightful work *English as She is Spoke*—"The maid-servant for to excuse himself was bing a little cat upon the hand, saying that she caught him in the crime finishing to eat the two pounds from butter who remain." The maid-servant did literally "bing" Jones "upon the hand." He was just big enough to sit comfortably upon it; and it was not a large hand. He was, in fact, the smallest cat I had ever seen. It almost seemed as if the Fates, having tried me with two enormous black cats, had gone to the opposite extreme and sought out the very smallest they could find. He was about the size of a week-old kitten. No one, however, would have dreamed of calling him a kitten. He was a perfectly grown-up cat. Indeed, from the world-weary expression in his eyes one would have guessed him to be about a hundred. He had the appearance, too, of having been caught in some crime. But when we inquired into it we found it was not the crime of "finishing to eat the two pounds from butter who remain," but merely of being found beneath the walnut-tree with no visible means of sustenance.

William, who had stooped to pick up some walnuts in the dark, had felt his hand brushed by some-



thing soft, and stretching out after it had found what in the dark he thought was a kitten, but what the light of a lamp revealed to be a little black cat. Having learned my views about black cats, he took it up carefully and carried it to the house. "Some one who wanted to get rid of it must have put it inside the gate. It's the best thing to do when you want to get rid of a cat. I've done it myself," said William.

Only the day before, the cook had complained that the larder was over-run with mice. But even if we had not wanted a cat we should have found it impossible to refuse a home to the pitiful, half-starved looking little foundling that gazed at us with dazed, mournful eyes, and shrank mechanically when any one approached it, as if to avoid a blow. It was enrolled as a member of the family at first sight, and received the name of Tom Jones (which very soon degenerated into Jones) before it had been five minutes in the room.

It was the weirdest little cat I have ever seen—the kind of cat that one sees in a nightmare, as black as a coal, with large bat-like ears, big, mournful eyes, a tiny neck that made one fear its head might break off, a little bag of bones for a body, long thin legs, and an insignificant-looking tail, which had a bend at the end of it as if it had been shut in a door. When

it walked it lifted up its legs one after the other with a curious action, as if it were stepping about among chimney-pots. It was obviously a cat of low degree —a gutter cat, or street-arab of a cat.

Warm milk was brought and put before it on the rug. It gulped it down eagerly, and then remained where we had put it, looking in a dazed way at the fire—bewildered, no doubt, by the sudden plunge from dark misery to heavenly comfort, and wondering, perhaps, at the strange feeling of warmth that was creeping over its body. After a minute or two it began to make a curious croaking sound in its throat. We listened to it for some time before it occurred to us that it was trying to purr. The intermittent hoarse sound suggested that its purring apparatus was being tried for the first time.

There was a pathos about that very small, half-starved cat sitting on the hearthrug and trying to purr that almost brought tears to one's eyes.



IV

THE TIGER

THOUGH a cat of insignificant, not to say mean appearance, Tom Jones possessed a fine spirit. He had not been five minutes in the house before he gave proof of it.

"Hullo! Here's a cat! What a lark!" said Tom Tug, the bull-dog, galumphing up at him in his clumsy way. "The little spitfire!" was his next remark. For in the twinkling of an eye the picture had changed—reminding one of those rapid changes that take place in a comic magic-lantern slide. Jones had, in fact, with bewildering rapidity, boxed the bull-dog's ears, scratched his face, bitten his nose, and throwing himself back against the wall in an attitude of theatrical defiance, with arched back and furiously ruffled tail, was showing a little red tongue and hissing the most ungodly abuse at him. Tom Tug, checked unexpectedly in his good-humoured

onslaught, stood looking at him, his countenance distorted into an expression of astonished interrogation.

The Schipperke puppy lying by the fire in the next room heard the commotion, and, loving nothing so much as a row, was on the scene like winking. A black object, like himself, only smaller, exhibiting curious symptoms, was an unusual sight, and he rushed up in his inquisitive way to investigate and smell it. What happened next was over so soon that one had not time to grasp it in detail. The two black objects became one for an instant—legs and tail flew, language was spit, shrieked, and hissed, and the Schipperke fled yelling to the kitchen, to be comforted by the cook. Our sympathy followed him for a moment, and then turned to look at Jones. He was seated on the ground, and with one thin arm stretched out was calmly licking his paw with as absolute unconcern and self-possession as if the events of the last minute had never occurred. Whether it was a piece of consummate acting on his part, or the humility born of true greatness, it was difficult to say, but from his behaviour one would have gathered that he thought no more of his exploit than he did of having consumed the contents of the empty saucer which still lay on the rug. And yet he had, in the space of half a minute, not only defeated but utterly routed, on their own ground, a large bull-dog and an



athletic Schipperke, one of which at least might have made a mouthful of him and felt none the worse. The comparative size of the animals made the combat ludicrous. Tom Tug would with difficulty have got inside a nine-gallon ale cask, while a pint pot would have held Tom Jones with room to spare.

In spite of his apparent unconcern, one could detect in Jones the confidence born of success. "I may be a foundling, of shabby appearance, and with a bend in my tail," he seemed to say, as he licked his paws, "but I am more than a match for those dogs." So assured of this fact did he seem to be that he regarded the dogs when next they ventured to inspect him (from a respectful distance) with a sort of tolerant complacency, not even taking the trouble to move from his reclining position on the rug.

Cats never stir my affections in the way dogs do. But there are things about them that never fail to stir my admiration—their independence, their self-possession under all circumstances, their impenetrable reserve, and the way they always know their own minds. The moment he entered the house Tom Jones made up his mind to stay. He never attempted to stray. He took up his abode in the kitchen, and behaved himself well enough to have merited a good-conduct badge by the end of the week. He very soon adapted himself to his new circumstances.

had dropped a cork on the hearthrug. "What's that?" he said, and went a step nearer to investigate it. "Oh! a cork! What fun!" And crouching down he stretched an arm out towards it, and making a little curled hand of his furry paw, gave it a series of playful pats, looking at it with his head on one side the while, in a way calculated to make one believe that it was a game which required great skill and dexterity.

If the Tiger had boasted a coat of arms, "What fun!" would doubtless have been his motto. It summed up his view of life more adequately than any other formula one could have thought of. He ejaculated it on all occasions, and over every new encounter. Life was for him full of surprises and fun. He gave a little hysterical gasp at first sight of the dogs, but after they had exchanged sniffs, and he had boxed their ears with velvet paws, he appeared to consider even them rather fun. They on their part contemplated him with approval. Tom Tug nudged the Schipperke. "A much better sort than that spitfire Jones," he said. And the Schipperke agreed.

The introduction to Jones came next, and it was then that the Tiger's beautiful affectionate nature revealed itself. He had been brought up on caresses himself, it is true. The world had never been any-



thing for him but a softly-cushioned place, full of places to nestle in and caressing hands. But that a little aristocratic kitten with fur between his toes and in his ears should be eager to take a miserable little foundling like Jones, with his bat-like ears and shabby, bent tail, straight to his furry arms was more than we expected. And yet that was what the Tiger did. As soon as Jones appeared the Tiger ran towards him with a purr of affection and a caress. Harsh treatment in early life had made Jones shy, reserved, and a little distrustful. He did not respond, and when the Tiger persisted gave vent to a low growl. It would, however, have needed a stony heart to resist the Tiger's blandishments. And Jones's heart was not stony. By the end of the day he was the Tiger's sworn friend and slave.



V

FRIENDS

BEFORE the Tiger had been a week in the house a marked change came over Tom Jones. He began to grow young again. When he first arrived he was a little scarecrow of a cat, and looked about a hundred. A fortnight's companionship with the Tiger had almost reduced him to a kitten. His bones began to disappear, his black fur grew velvety, the bewildered scared look in his eyes gave place to one of placid content, and his purring apparatus, which had got rusty from disuse, began to work quite smoothly.

The Tiger had a frank, open-hearted way with him that you sometimes see in a well-bred child. He thought the world a charming place, and every one in it delightful; and the most delightful person in it at present was certainly Jones. He was just what he wanted to make life perfect—a best friend of his own age to romp and go walks with. The Tiger was



sublimely unconscious of such things as class distinctions. If you had suggested that Jones was not a suitable companion for him, he would certainly have said "Pooh! Jones is a capital fellow." In his opinion one cat was as good as another—and sometimes better. And in spite of the shabby coat and bent tail, he and Jones were inseparable companions by the end of a fortnight.

I doubt if at any age cats are as snobbish as dogs. They have too much independence of character, and care too little what other people think of them. A dog is a thin-skinned creature, super-sensitive to other people's opinion. Greater intimacy with man, too, has possibly had in some respects a deteriorating effect on his character. I have known a well-bred dog, when hard up for companionship, go round the corner to play with a cur of low degree. If, when out for a walk with his master, he happened to meet the cur in the street, he would cut him dead, and give his master the impression that he had never even seen him before.

It would have been impossible, as I said before, for any one to have resisted the Tiger's blandishments. After the first distrustful growl, Jones succumbed, and subsided into an attitude of wondering admiration. Brought up among half-starved gutter cats, who swore and squabbled and battled with cold and

hunger and each other for their shabby existence, the Tiger, who did nothing but purr and play and pat with velvet paws, was a revelation to him. He did not know that such beautiful, charming creatures existed, and it was not to be wondered at that he fell under the spell of his fascinations. For the first few days he followed him about with large eyes of wistful admiration. Then he ventured in a tentative, cautious way to walk about after him—to see where he was going, and what he was going to do next. At last, in response to the Tiger's repeated overtures, he let himself go so far as to indulge in a romp.

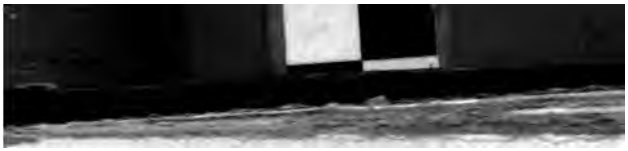
Though the Tiger recognized no difference between himself and Jones, I always felt that Jones knew himself to be inferior in station. When, as time went on, Jones developed a degree of cleverness and originality of character that were beyond the common, the Tiger's obvious admiration might have caused any one with less solidity of character to lose their heads and forget their relative positions. But Jones seemed to realize that the fact that the Tiger was a pedigree cat, while he was a foundling, was one which neither originality nor cleverness could modify.

"Jones does all the work," said the cook one morning. When I asked what she meant she informed me that it was Jones's habit every morning, after grooming himself, to thoroughly groom the



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Tiger. The Tiger would recline lazily on the rug in front of the fire, and accept the service as any lady might the brushing of her hair by her maid.

Till he met the Tiger, I imagine Jones had never known what it was to play. But once he had indulged in a skirmish he was always ready to respond to the Tiger's signal. The usual game was the pounce game. The Tiger would hide himself beneath the frill of a chair ; Jones would respond by hiding himself beneath another. At a sign from the Tiger they would dash out, seize each other round the neck, roll over on the floor, kicking each other with their hind-legs, and then with tails on high gallop off in opposite directions to hide and begin again.

Though as a rule Jones was ready to follow the Tiger wherever he went (and the Tiger's versatility and discursiveness gave him plenty to do), there was an element of caution in Jones's nature, which occasionally made him pause before embarking on an enterprise which was obviously foolhardy. No doubt having to do battle with the world in his infancy, had given him a tendency to look ahead and count the cost and probability of danger before taking a step. The Tiger did not understand the meaning of caution, and for him danger did not exist. It never entered his head to pause. If it occurred to him to

do anything, he did it at once. He had the true spirit of an adventurer, and, like Alice in Wonderland, made it a habit to go up or down anything he came across, without for a moment considering how he was to get back again.

They were walking in the garden together on one occasion when they came across a ladder set up against the side of the house, and leading to the roof of a small wing. "Let's go up here," said the Tiger, and proceeded to mount. Jones followed him to the foot of the ladder, put his paw on the first rung, hesitated, withdrew it, and sat down. "No," he said. "As soon as we have reached the roof some one will come and take the ladder away, and then where shall we be?" So he seated himself on the ground and proceeded to watch the Tiger. The Tiger reached the roof and with head raised, and body and tail sweeping low, his characteristic attitude when on a voyage of discovery, proceeded to walk along the tiles. Meanwhile, what Jones had apparently foreseen, occurred—William came and took away the ladder. After perambulating in a leisurely way on the roof and investigating everything to his satisfaction, the Tiger came back to the ladder, which, to his evident surprise, he found was no more. A conversation then ensued between him and Jones (still seated below on the ground), in which Jones



evidently told him what had become of the ladder. "Never mind," said the Tiger, "I shall wait till he brings it back. It is very pleasant up here, and I have a splendid view of the sparrows." And he settled himself comfortably on a little ledge, and gazed, now at the sparrows in the ivy overhead, now at Jones seated on the ground below.

Cats have an inexhaustible supply of patience. For three mortal hours did those kittens sit there, looking at each other, and occasionally exchanging remarks, the Tiger on the roof and Jones on the ground. Doubtless they would be sitting there still if it had not occurred to some one to wonder why Jones sat there hour after hour, and what he was looking at. The ladder was brought, and Jones watched the descent, at which William assisted, with, I thought, some anxiety. When, partly scrambling, partly lifted, the Tiger reached the ground, they ran at each other with little purrs of inquiry and response, and then walked off hand in hand round the garden to talk it over.

They became more inseparable as time went on, and were a quaint little pair of friends—the Tiger pale, grey, and fluffy, Tom Jones black and smooth ; the Tiger with long furry trousers, Jones in black tights. In fact, one rarely saw one without the other. They slept together (in a barrel full of straw

in the kitchen), fed together out of the same saucer, played together, and walked together, and took frequent siestas rolled up together in an arm-chair in the dining-room. I sent for them once to show them to a friend who was having tea with me. They were picked up out of the chair, brought in half asleep, and deposited on the rug side by side. They had been so sound asleep that they could not wake up at first, but sat upright, side by side, close together on the rug, just as they had been put down, without moving, and with half-closed, blinking eyes. Then they indulged in a hearty yawn in unison. It seemed to do them good, for they next proceeded to give their face and heads a thorough washing with their paws, licking their hands and passing them rapidly over their noses, eyes, and behind their ears. They paused for a moment and gave another yawn in unison, and then hoisting, each, their outside leg over their shoulders, so that they made between them a symmetrical cat pattern, gave them a thorough grooming. It was a funny little exhibition of cat drill. The movements went together with such precision that one might have imagined they were being done to music.



VI

FEMININE TACTICS

SPEAKING generally, dogs are masculine and cats feminine. If one speaks of a gay young dog, or a nasty old cat, it is unnecessary to explain that the former refers to a man and the latter to a woman. The attitude of dogs towards cats is, too, in many respects suggestive of the attitude of man towards woman—that is, of men as a class towards women as a class. Every dog of spirit despises cats in his heart of hearts, and thanks Heaven he was born a dog. If it were suggested to dogs that they should extend the franchise to cats, they would laugh the suggestion to scorn. They would, in fact, absolutely refuse to allow cats to vote. And yet an impartial observer, who is neither a cat nor a dog, cannot help feeling that in a case of government it would be for the greater good of the greater number that the somewhat clumsy hardheadedness of dogs should be tempered by

the delicacy, the intuitive cleverness, of cats. Of one thing, however, I feel assured—and that is that if cats wished for votes they would very soon get them. And they would gain their ends by the use of those qualities in which they excel dogs—their quick perceptions, keen instincts, knack of seizing the opportunity, and general powers of finessing. They would bide their time, and in a moment dogs knew not of, would outwit them and seize the franchise. If I had not known this before, the way Tom Jones and the Tiger went to work to obtain a barrel of their own to sleep in would have convinced me.

It was when the cold weather set in that Tom Tug and the Schipperke, who had hitherto slept on mats outside the dining-room door, were given houses to sleep in. Tom was given a large roomy barrel, and the Schipperke a little white kennel. Both houses were furnished with clean dry straw, and they were placed at opposite sides of the little tiled passage at the back of the house. There is no doubt that the acquisition of a house of one's own gives one a feeling of responsibility, and inclines one to take a more serious view of life. Both Tom Tug and the Schipperke felt this. They got into their houses at once, and sat in them, looking solemn, and as if they were thinking about turning over new leaves by way of adapting themselves to their new dignities. It seemed



to them that something important must be going to happen. But nothing did. And they had to content themselves with the fact that a house of one's own constitutes an epoch in the life of a dog just as much as it does in the life of a human being.

By and by the cats came walking by. As the Tiger said to Jones afterwards, "You might have knocked me down with a feather, when I saw those two sitting in their houses, as grave as judges, and so full of importance that they had not a word to throw at a cat." After the first start of surprise, which they tried, somewhat unsuccessfully, to dissemble, they proceeded to investigate the new institutions. Jones jumped on the roof of the Schipperke's kennel and the Tiger on the roof of Tom's barrel. They walked along the top, looked behind and down the sides and finally over from the roof and in at the doors, where they could see the heads of the two dogs. Then they changed, and Jones investigated the barrel, and the Tiger the kennel. They then jumped lightly off on to the ground, and sitting some little way off, proceeded to wash their paws and faces, as if the fact that Tom Tug and the Schipperke had got houses of their own was a matter of supreme indifference to them. No one to look at them would have guessed that they had winked at each other and made a plan. But as Tom Tug said to the Schipperke afterwards,

when talking it over, "Cats are so sly. You never know what they are up to."

You can't spend the whole day in the house, even when it happens to be new. For the good of your health a certain amount of outdoor exercise is necessary. Besides, the delights of rushing after the bicycle are not to be missed. So when they heard themselves called, the Schipperke was out of his house and through the door like a shot. Even Tom Tug, always more deliberate in his movements, was not too long. But as he went through the door, he looked back with slight misgiving at his new possession. "I suppose it will be all right," he said to himself.

For a second or two the cats continued to wash their paws and faces as if they thought of nothing else. Then they paused and looked up. "Are they quite gone?" asked the Tiger. "Yes," said Jones, "I heard the gate shut."

* * * * *

"Just look at those two cats!" said some one coming into the passage a minute or two later. For there they sat—Jones in the Schipperke's kennel and the Tiger in Tom Tug's barrel—as cool as cucumbers, and as self-possessed as if they had been there all their lives. Tom Jones was sitting up inside the door of the kennel and complacently going on with his toilet. The Tiger was nestled down in the straw like a sitting



hen, and with raised head was taking stock of the inside of the barrel, with evident approval. Jones seemed to be smiling to himself as he licked his paw, as if he anticipated the return of the dogs with some amusement.

The dogs were in high spirits when they returned. They came in at the door with a rush, eager to see if their new houses were all right. They made straight for them, and then they came to a dead stand. "Well I'm ——," said Tom Tug, and said no more. But the Schipperke filled the pause with language that I really should not have supposed he knew the meaning of. As for the cats, they did not even blink. They sat tight, monuments of complacency. After a minute the Tiger sat up, probably thinking that at any moment he might be compelled to action, and that it was well to be prepared. When Tom Tug ventured a step nearer with a gesture of expostulation, he gave him a playful pat on the cheek with his paw, and withdrawing it assumed again an attitude of strict decorum.

The Schipperke having vented his feelings in his first outburst tried persuasive measures. He pawed the ground in front of the kennel coaxingly, approaching gradually till his nose nearly touched that of Jones, who, however, did not budge an inch. Then darting back, he barked excitedly, as if he hoped

thereby to entice Jones to jump out after him. Jones eyed him with contempt, and showed not the slightest intention of moving. He was, in fact, as he very well knew, perfect master of the situation, and would in all probability have remained in the kennel for the rest of the day, if his intentions had not been modified by what happened at the barrel. Tom Tug made up his mind to take a bold step.

"I can't stand this," he said. And shutting his eyes, so as to avoid scratches, he proceeded to get into the barrel as if the Tiger were not there. The result was a scuffle, a few bad words, and the Tiger, very much ruffled, was ejected on to the floor. Tom Tug, after a series of revolutions, and a little scratching up of the straw to make it soft, subsided with a sigh of satisfaction, and with chin resting on his paws watched through half-closed eyes the Tiger's discomfiture. The Tiger was, in fact, ruffled and put out in more senses than one. I had, indeed, never seen him so near losing his temper. As he walked out through the door, with his fur all awry, contriving, as is the way of cats, to look dignified even when sorely humiliated, "Stupid fools!" he said to Jones, who sprang out to follow and comfort. "Dogs can never see a joke."

For the next fortnight there was open warfare between the cats and the dogs. I must say that the



cats were extremely aggravating. No sooner had the dogs turned their backs than they jumped into their houses, so that when the dogs returned from their walk they invariably found them in possession.

High words ensued, and frequently ended in a scuffle. In fact, our domestic peace was threatened, and would no doubt have been destroyed if it had not occurred to us to try the experiment of giving the cats a house of their own. A barrel filled with straw was provided, and proved to be just what they wanted. They took to it at once. They had got what they wanted, and peace was forthwith restored.



VII

'CAFÉ-AU-LAIT'

THE name had no reference to her personal appearance (for she was as black as a raven), but—so my cousin Lavinia told me—to the beautiful pale brown egg she laid every morning for breakfast. For Lavinia affects not only to know her sixteen black hens apart, and call them by name, but also to tell you which egg is laid by which particular fowl.

"My dear," she says to me when I appear sceptical as to her possession of what seem to me nothing less than occult powers, "I cannot explain the mysteries of poultry keeping; but I assure you that that egg which you are now eating was laid by Café-au-lait this morning, and that it is in my experienced eyes as different to the eggs laid by the other fowls, as is Café-au-lait herself different in appearance to the other hens.

After Lavinia had made this (to me) astonishing



assertion, I happened to have Café-au-lait under close observation for a quarter of an hour, and I spent the whole of that time earnestly trying to discover some point in which she differed from the other hens, without the least success. Not only was she precisely like all the others in shape, colour, and size, but she had the same cold, critical eye, the same vindictive-looking beak, the same stiff, cautious way of picking her steps, the same croaking, discontented voice. When I mentioned the result of my observations to Lavinia she was quite indignant.

"My *dear*," she said, "do you mean to tell me that you see no difference between the expression of that gentle, sweet-tempered, affectionate little 'Café-au-lait,' and that sour-faced, cross-looking 'Farouche' over there, or that spiteful, morose 'Juliette,' who hasn't laid an egg for weeks!" For another of Lavinia's affectations (and as such I cannot but regard them) is to call all her hens by French names. She has a "Rousette," a "Juliette," a "Minette," a "Paresseuse," and I know not what names besides.

My first introduction to Café-au-lait was not calculated to impress me in her favour. After lunch Lavinia, equipped in a large linen apron and pair of gauntlet gloves, proceeds with an enamelled basin full of "scraps" to the hen-yard. A premium is put

upon waste in Lavinia's house on behalf of this basin. "Never mind," she says, when she helps one too bountifully, "leave it, and it will do for my hens." When I am staying with my cousin I usually accompany her on this mission. I do not go as far as Lavinia, who tells me (and her behaviour supports the assertion) that she is really *fond* of hens. But I consider their manners curious and interesting, and it amuses me to see Lavinia dealing with them.

As we walked towards the hen-yard on this particular occasion Lavinia found fault with the way the cook had cut up the scraps. "I cannot get her to cut them up small enough," she said. "Look at that bit," pointing to a cube of what looked liked beef. "Why, it is big enough to choke a hen!"

The hens are always to be seen waiting for Lavinia in a crowd inside the wire-netting. When she opens the gate and goes in, there is a rush (each one trying to get there first) which the cocks, who apparently will not lower themselves by taking part in a scrimmage, watch from a little distance. On this occasion I had the curiosity to watch the career of the cube of beef about which Lavinia had expressed apprehensions, and followed its flight, when she scattered a handful of scraps, to where it fell, some way off, near the water-pan. A hen with an eye to the main chance immediately marked it for her own,



and half ran, half flew towards it. She seized the morsel, and without pausing to look round, as if she knew quite well she would be pursued, tore with it to a far corner of the hen-yard. Another hen had started in pursuit with long ungainly strides before she got there, and was just in time to snatch the prize from under her very nose, and in her turn tore off with it at full speed, to be in her turn pursued by another, and subjected to precisely the same barbarous treatment. The coveted morsel went the whole round of the hen-yard, being snatched by one hen from the other in this monstrously rude fashion, till it reached Café-au-lait, who took the precaution to avoid further risks by swallowing it whole. This she did with some difficulty. For though, owing to the snatching and pecking, it had considerably diminished in size, it was still too large a piece to be swallowed whole with comfort. However, she summoned prudence, greed, and resolution to her aid, and with an air of performing a painful duty she gulped, and gulped, and gulped, till with one supreme gulp, over which I really thought she would choke, she got it down. Meanwhile the disappointed hens "crawed" dissatisfaction, and the cocks (it seemed to me) smiled approbation from a distance.

It was on the following day that Café-au-lait was

seized with cramp. Whether the seizure was the consequence of swallowing the beef or not I do not know—nor did Lavinia. But she was found in the morning, with her legs doubled under her, her head bent forward on the ground, and her tail drooping, unable to stand up, and looking, in short, as if she were intoxicated. Lavinia adds to the other qualities that go to make up her somewhat unique character a remarkable intrepidity. And in nothing is this intrepidity more noticeable (to my thinking) than in her dealings with hens. She is absolutely without fear of them. I have seen her go straight up to a perfect virago of a hen (that had made up its mind to lay an egg in some one else's nest), a most ferocious creature that looked as if it would not hesitate to peck a hole in her hand if she touched it, and in spite of its struggles and vicious pecks lift it out and put it forcibly into its own nest. I believe I am not more pusillanimous than most of my sex, but I confess I dare not pick up the best-tempered hen in the world against its will. There is, to my mind, something distinctly quelling in the eye and beak of a reluctant hen.

Lavinia picked up poor dilapidated Café-au-lait hastily, and with the greatest concern examined her legs. Then she summoned the garden boy, and they held a consultation and came to the conclusion that



she had cramp in her legs, and that they must at once be rubbed with some condiment and bandaged in cotton-wool. Lavinia held her while the garden boy performed this office. Café-au-lait's expression while her legs were being bandaged was, as they say, "a caution." She kept her eye, which expressed frenzied indignation, fixed on the garden boy's hand the whole time. Her beak was partly open and she panted audibly with passion. I thought to myself that I should not care to be in that garden boy's shoes. As he wound the cotton-wool round and round her legs, her beak drooped lower and lower towards his hand. Suddenly she gave a vicious peck. Though I had been expecting it with suspended breath, it was as much as I could do to repress a scream. "Poor little thing," was all Lavinia said, meaning Café-au-lait, "she is frightened out of her wits."

The following day Lavinia had the audacity to ask me to unbandage Café-au-lait's legs for her. She made the request as if she were asking me to untie a knot in her veil, or some such slight, everyday service. The boy had just gone to the post with the letters, *would* I mind just taking the bandages off Café-au-lait's legs, while she held her! "My dear Lavinia," I said, "I would do anything to oblige you, but I simply daren't. If she were to make a dig at

my hand as she did at the boy's yesterday, I should have hysterics on the spot." "But," said Lavinia, "I *promise* not to let her peck. I will hold my hand over her beak the whole time."

I have always looked upon taking the bandages off Café-au-lait's legs as the most heroic act I have ever performed. Certainly it required every atom of courage I possessed. For I did it. It took me about ten minutes. I did it, so to speak, in jerks, pulling my hand away every time I saw an evil gleam in her eye, and pausing every now and then to take fresh courage. She glared at my hand, with the most villainous expression the whole time, and would undoubtedly have pecked a hole in it if Lavinia had not held her beak. Once or twice Lavinia took her hand away to stroke her head. When she did this I leapt to the gate and swore I would not touch the bandage if she did such a thing again. As for Lavinia she simply laughed the whole time. "You don't mean to say you were really afraid?" she said, as we went back to the house.

And to this day, I believe, she thinks it was an elaborate piece of acting on my part.



VIII

'A REAL SPRING DAY'

THERE is no doubt about it. March has come in blustering and roaring like a lion. Our only comfort—and that which enables us to endure his tempestuous behaviour with equanimity—is the thought that when he has worked off his steam he will subside into the gentlest lamb and trot out with hardly a gambol.

For the first few days we were doubtful which character he had assumed. A mild demeanour seemed to betoken the lamb. But little irrepressible gusts that burst through the smiling sunshine made one suspect the lion. It may have been that the lion, but yet a cub, in gambolling mood, was frolicking with the lamb. And this, I am inclined to think, was the solution. For there was about those first few days a judicious mingling of sunshine and breeze that suggested the mild gentleness of the lamb tempered by the fierceness of the lion.

Whatever may have been the ingredients, the result was one of those days that we speak of as "a real spring day"—a day which, if we were planted suddenly in its midst, we should recognize at once as unmistakable spring—a day which came upon us as a surprise and made us say to ourselves, "I had forgotten what a delightful thing a real spring day is." It is true that our memory, if we choose to stir it up, is full of pleasant recollections of spring days in the past. If we even take the trouble to look back we can see them shining through the mist of years here and there, like pictures. It may be a sunny copse carpeted with primroses and dog-violets; or a larch wood, whose tree-tops tinged with pale green let the sunshine through to the long green grass dotted with wild blue hyacinths, that emerges from the obscurity as the transformation scene in a pantomime. But though these memories make us feel the spirit of spring in our veins, they have not the evil power to make the present fall flat and disappoint. The real spring day, with the feeling of exhilaration it brings to us, if we are in sympathetic mood, always comes as a surprise.

According to the calendar on my chimney-piece, spring lasts for three months. Its bounds are the 21st of March and the 21st of June. But the capricious weather may so deface the three months that we



hardly know them to be spring. It may sulk and growl and be content to throw us a grudging smile at rare intervals. On the other hand, it may scatter spring-like days so lavishly through the months that they may shine as if with jewels.

The difference between such a day as the one I speak of and the ordinary run of days at the early part of year seems to be that the air is charged with the very essence of spring. A spirit is abroad diffused through the atmosphere that forces everything to a more furious vitality. We seem to draw it into our lungs with the sunshine and the breeze, till we feel so light that we have only to touch the earth with our toe (so we think) to bound up and away over the fields and the tree-tops, as one does in a dream.

I felt it creeping in at the open window at early dawn. It made me stir as I lay half sleeping, and put a feeling of pleasant industry into my bones. As I awoke I thought with cheerful anticipation that it would soon be time to get up. That the feeling was due to something in the air, and not to any personal idiosyncracy, I gathered from the fact that I could hear it spreading through the house. The household was astir at least half-an-hour earlier than usual. I was called ten minutes before the time, and the bath water was boiling-hot. The blinds drawn up let in a flood of sunshine and light breeze mixed with the

exhilarating essence of which I spoke. It went to my head and made me spring out of bed as soon as the maid had left the room. The breakfast-room was full of it. It seemed to have got into the toast and made it crisp, to have given a pungency to the tea, and a beautiful brown tinge to the rolls.

The dogs who, as a rule, sit in the room during breakfast wondering if they are going to have any toast, rushed in to say good-morning, and tore out again with pricked ears, as if they had left something outside which they were afraid might disappear if they stayed away too long. In less than five minutes they came back again to see if I was coming. My apathy was marvellous to them. Do you mean to say you can bother about breakfast on a day like this! What *are* human beings made of! The cats jumped in through the window from the yellow crocus bed, and walked round the table purring, with their tails on high. But even they could not stand a roof over their heads, and in the second round they jumped lightly on to the window-sill, and down among the crocuses again.

The enthusiasm of the animals shamed me. I finished my second piece of toast, glanced through the post, which seemed more refreshing than usual—it consisted chiefly of catalogues of spring novelties—and followed them into the garden. Then I agreed



with them that, when one could have such a canopy overhead, it was perverse to remain under a roof. It was a sunny sky, gaily blue and splashed with white masses that sailed like yachts under full sail. The air was that exhilarating mixture that had found its way in at my bedroom window. Only, outside, it sparkled as well. It had rained in the night, so that the ground was moist and dark, and the green leaves of the bulbs looked brimful of satisfaction. The breezy sunshine was drying the ground and the grass and the leaves as quickly as it could, ruffling the leaves of the primroses and violets and rollicking about among the shrubs and the bulbs as if he was thoroughly enjoying himself. The violets and primroses seemed to me all to have burst open at once. About the shrubberies the ground was dotted with purple and yellow. The violets, instead of hiding their heads beneath the leaves, as we are told modest violets do, were holding them up to the sun with effrontery. The essence of spring that was abroad seemed to have got into them and made them bold, so that they no longer feared to show their faces.

I walked round the garden and looked at them, but refrained from picking them. Then I walked out on the grass. It was still glistening from the rain. Overhead was a perfect chorus of larks, pouring their song into the blue sky with all their might. I shaded

my eyes from the sun, and looked up at the sky, which was dotted with them. Some were so far off that they looked like tiny pin-points, and their song reached one as a faint carolling. Others were rising joyfully with a glad burst. Others, having poured their souls out, were coming swiftly down to rest. I longed to be a lark that I might rush up and sing my feelings into a sympathetic sky. Or even a poet that I might vent them in an ode.

The dogs had chosen the sunniest spot on the lawn, and were having a tug-of-war over a stick, of which each had an end. They tugged and growled till one of them gained possession and tore off with a swoop round and round the garden, the other at his heels. Soon they dropped the stick, and then they tore round and round after nothing at all, from sheer high spirits. They went so fast that the bull-dog might have been mistaken for a greyhound, so much did he stretch his legs. His clumsy frame was not adapted for such lightning speed, and after several rounds he flopped down on the ground exhausted and panting. Then the Schipperke seized the stick and pranced up to me inviting me to a tug-of-war. Surely I must want to worry a stick or do something to vent my feelings. When I failed to respond he seized my skirt and shook it, as if he would worry me out of my irritating state of indifference. I told him that it

was foolish to judge by appearances; that it was not my way to worry sticks; and that he must not imagine that because I was outwardly calm I was indifferent within. In fact, my mind was a tumult of plans, thoughts, and emotions,—a confused medley—that chased each other up and down and in and out. Mingled with emotions about the greenness of the bulbs, the brownness of the earth, and the lightness of the air, and aspirations about life and love, were thoughts of clothes—print shirts, linen coats and skirts, soft muslin blouses, and the like. The picture of myself clothed in white duck sent me indoors to write for patterns. On the way out I passed my bicycle, looking bright and clean, and cheerfully expectant of a run. I mounted it and went three times round the shrubberies, in and out of curved paths, without touching the handles. It was a feat I had never accomplished before.

I was neither a lark nor a poet to vent my feelings in a song, but I vented them in that ride. I felt as if I were flying. So great were my spirit and confidence that I felt I could go on for ever.

IX

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

THERE is, perhaps, nothing in which people differ more than in their sensitiveness to the sufferings of animals. While some are haunted for days by the thought of a creature in pain, others will have been no more impressed by the sight than by the passing of a hansom cab in a London street, and will have forgotten it as quickly. Even the sympathetic differ greatly in their definition of cruelty, the view they take of it being very much a matter of individual temperament. I have seen a roomful of people divided equally on the question which were the crueller way of putting an end to a mouse caught in a trap; to put him mouse-trap and all into a pail of water and let him drown, or to let him loose in a barn where the chances are two to one that he will be caught by the cat.

A natural fear of death causes many people to



regard the mere killing of an animal with undue horror. People who shudder at the thought of the fox's run for life and rapid death, torn to pieces by the hounds, will gaze unmoved at the same creature condemned to the horrors of perpetual confinement in a small cage in a menagerie. Apart from the naturalists, with whose distress at the destruction of small birds every one sympathizes, there are hundreds of people whose feelings are outraged by the sight of a hat shop decorated with trophies of slaughtered wild birds, and who will experience no distress of mind on seeing a bird shop full of living wild birds beating their wings against the bars of cages so small that they can barely turn round. The point of view of such people seems unreasonable. The fox in being killed and the birds in being shot do but anticipate a little their inevitable fate. Do what they will they cannot escape death. It is one of the inevitable consequences of having been born. And it is by no means certain that it hurts more to be shot, or even to be killed by dogs, than to die a natural death.

I confess that I would rather see a woman clothed from head to foot in slaughtered larks than see a sight which I saw yesterday, and which may be seen in almost any country village at this time of year—a wild lark imprisoned in a tiny cage and beating its

wings against the bars in a terrified effort to escape. The cage (the little green and white wooden bird-cage familiar to every one) was about six inches square. With a refinement of cruelty it was hung on the outside wall of the cottage, so that the poor little inmate had a view of the open sky and common, and could see and hear dozens of its little mates who still had their liberty rush up into the sky with their glad song. I passed it three times in one week. Each time it was beating its wings against the bars and roof of its tiny prison in a frantic effort to escape and soar, and making a pathetic little attempt at a song. The fourth time I passed the cottage it was no longer there. A woman was standing at the door. I asked her what had become of the lark. "Oh! it died," she said. And then, after a pause, "They never *do* seem to live long; and my boy, I think he must have forgot to give this one any water; he's so careless."

It may seem strange that my sympathy with the little creature had not led me to beg or buy its release. But such a proceeding is, I have found, quite unsatisfactory in its results. The satisfaction of opening the door and letting the prisoner escape is worth paying for. But if it is to be paid for by other birds taking the place of the one released, it defeats its own object. On one occasion I paid a shilling for the



pleasure of releasing a lark. A day or two later I passed the cottage where it hung, and found that two new prisoners had taken its place. I paid two shillings for the release of these two and a promise that they would catch no more. A week later there were no less than three hanging in cages on the wall. By creating a demand for imprisoned larks I had done more harm than good.

On another occasion I tried, by working on the feelings of a cottage woman, to induce her to let a lark go for nothing. After a good deal of persuasion she yielded. Next time I saw her she said—

"My boy, he did take on about that lark! He cried his eyes out. Nothing 'ud pacify him, but we must get him another, so 'is big brother's promised to catch 'im one."

It is difficult to see what possible gratification it can be to any one to keep a lark in a cage, where, deprived of the whole point of its existence, the liberty to soar and sing, it is no better than a sparrow, and where it does nothing but beat its wings till it droops and dies of exhaustion. And yet there are thousands captured every year, and doomed to this treatment by people who would eye you with wonder were you to suggest that it would be far less cruel to kill them at once.

Hundreds of dogs are kept chained up from one

year's end to another by people who would think it cruel to shoot them. They do not seem to realize that in keeping a dog perpetually chained up and deprived of his liberty they are guilty of far greater cruelty than in killing it. I once stayed at a house in the country where a retriever was chained up in the yard. A year back he had been condemned to lifelong imprisonment for some misdeed (killing a chicken, I believe). He was never let loose at all. When I asked why they did not shoot him, they said no one liked to do it, and that he was useful as a watch-dog. Though he would tug frantically at his chain every time any one passed, begging to be released, and though his bark had a hollow ring of despair, and he would even sit sometimes and howl from sheer misery, they hardly seemed to believe that it would be kinder to shoot him.

While I was there I begged to be allowed to take him for an occasional country walk, and was permitted to do so on condition that I did not let him out of my sight. The poor creature's excitement at being let loose was touching. But I was not sure that the taste of liberty would not make his confinement the harder to bear.

It is a common sight, and one which we may see in any English village—a dog perpetually chained up. The usual excuse is that if let loose they would



bite some one or run away, and that no one has time to look after them. In my own village there is a certain lane that I always avoid because I know I shall pass a poor brown spaniel who is never let loose, and never without hope that every passer-by will prove his deliverer. I avoid passing him partly because the sight is a painful one, and partly because the impulse to go in and surreptitiously release him is so strong that I am afraid I may some day succumb to it.

In many ways a visit to the Zoo is one of the most delightful things in the world. The majority of the animals are light-minded creatures, who appear well content with their lot. And for most of them life is rendered as agreeable as is possible under the circumstances. But one rarely visits it without bringing away some picture to haunt one, of an animal pacing its cage with despair and misery in its eye. Two sights to stir one's pity and haunt one's mind are the eagle, who sits with hunched-up shoulders on a perch in a small white-washed cave, and the Polar bear, who occupies a small asphalt enclosure with an imitation pond. The eagle is the picture of soul-consuming despair—the Polar bear of noble scorn and implacable hatred of man. The bird who has had the whole range of the heavens, and who has soared over the highest forests and

mountain tops, and the animal who has had the boundless snow and ice plains of the Polar regions, refuse to submit meekly to the hideous change that has come over their lives.

As a child, one of my favourite dreams was that of a second Noah's Ark. Into it all the animals at the Zoo and elsewhere in captivity should march two by two, and, journeying round the world, it should deposit them all on the shores of their native land. It was a pleasant dream, and its only drawback was that it made no arrangement for the chained-up dogs, and wild birds in cages.



X

'GENESIS'

GENESIS, *alias* Genevix, *alias* Jenkins, *alias* Jenny is a Dandy Dinmont. She has a long body, short sturdy legs, a long tail that looks as if it were not under proper control, and untidy silky hair that falls over her face and partly conceals a pair of inquisitive eyes.

Great things were at one time expected of Genesis. She was to be the founder of families of pure-bred pedigree puppies that should make her owner's fortune. She was, in fact, the beginning of a dog-farm; a dog-farm that had its origin and developed into an enormous prosperous affair in imagination and nowhere else. And it was because she was the initial step in this great scheme that she received the somewhat foolish-sounding name of Genesis.

Like many great schemes, the dog-farm was never realized. The originator, who, as is often the case,

combined versatility with enthusiasm, was seized with a desire (before he had got further than Genesis) to go out and fight the Matabele, and forgetting all about the dog-farm, rushed off to South Africa. The dog-farm had been a harmless scheme, and had hurt no one, either in the plotting or the failing. No one had caught the originator's enthusiasm, and no one suffered. And one person distinctly benefitted—namely, Genesis. In fact, I have always suspected some kindly fate of having started the dog-farm scheme entirely to benefit Genesis—some kindly fate, who passing through the Leadenhall Market, and seeing Genesis's winsome little face peering through the bars of a cage, determined to befriend her.

However that may be, the market was relieved of a Dandy Dinmont one fine morning, and an hour later the same Dandy Dinmont was seated on the floor in a London drawing-room gazing with a puzzled expression at a circle of admirers, critics and scoffers, as if she was trying hard to understand what they were all talking about, and gathering dimly from the Babel of tongues and laughter that she was henceforth to answer to the name of Genesis. A day or two later, her purchaser, casting all thoughts of the dog-farm to the winds, was off to South Africa to fight the Matabele, and a temporary home had to be found for Genesis till he came back. There was no eager-



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ness to accept the responsibility, and for a day or two it almost seemed as if Genesis must seek her fate again in the market. Her master, who believed he had secured a prize, would not hear of this. If no one would have her, he said, he would take her to South Africa with him. This threat produced a somewhat reluctant offer of a temporary home—a home amid heather and pines, where, there being three dogs in the house already, one more, and such a little one, it was thought, would not make much difference.

So Genesis found her horizon shifted once more, and took up her abode in the midst of surroundings where hands ready to pat her, ruffle her shaggy hair banteringly over her eyes, and throw things for her to run after, laps and arm-chairs in which she was invited to curl herself up, and delightful walks in company with other dogs, who chased rabbits, plunged into ponds and sniffed about as they pleased, were new and pleasing elements. She set about very quietly to assimilate the new atmosphere. She allowed herself no ecstasies at first over the delightful change affairs had taken. Life had hitherto been a bewildering kaleidoscopic affair, full of rapid changes, and how did she know that all these good things might not be snatched away at a moment's notice, and she might not find herself again in that hideous pandemonium of a market, where no one had time to give

her a pat? Gradually, however, the softening influences began to produce a sort of "soul awakening." The shaggy, stumpy-legged, long-bodied little creature began to develop a personality, and to show that she had an individuality and a marked character of her own.

Independence, not to say obstinacy in pursuing her own plans, sense of humour, and keen sporting instincts, together with an affectionate disposition, and a wide sociability, that led her to make friends in all directions, were her chief characteristics. From the first she insisted upon going where she pleased. She refused to confine herself to any one department —to be a stable dog, a kitchen dog, a drawing-room dog, an outdoor dog, or an indoor dog. With a gentle persistence she intimated that she would be any sort of dog she felt inclined to be at the moment.

She began the day, as a rule, in a thoroughly domestic way, by going round the house with the hot water and seeing that every one was properly wakened. She would then go and see how the garden was getting on, and if there were any chance of a ride in a wheelbarrow. Rambles in the copse, where she sniffed about among rabbit-holes; occasional visits to the stable (to watch the pony being groomed), to the kitchen (to see what there was to be for dinner), to

the house, just to show that she was all right, and a walk, if it came in her way, made up the rest of the day. Frequently she did not put in an appearance in the house till afternoon tea, which she regarded as the pleasantest and most sociable meal in the day. For breakfast she did not care. It came at a time when it was far pleasanter to be out of doors, and she seldom patronized it. And dinner she considered a fraud—a meal of savoury smells, that resulted in nothing more for her than a dry biscuit at dessert.

Owing to her sociability and winning personality she had friends in every corner. In fact, I have never known a more popular dog (for her size) than Genesis. She received an open-arm welcome wherever she choose to put her nose. Nicknames are said to be a sign of popularity; and Genesis had more nicknames than any dog I have ever come across. She was never called Genesis, except officially, or by way of marking disapproval. She was Jenny, or Gin, or Jane, or Jenkins, or Jinks, or anything beginning with a J or G, that suggested itself as an endearing epithet. She particularly liked workmen, and was always a great favourite with them. When the new barn was being built any one might have thought that Genesis had been told off to superintend the operations, so closely did she watch its construction. She invariably rode in

the cart when it went backwards and forwards with bricks and stones, and when the workmen assembled under the trees for their mid-day meal, Jenny might always be seen in their midst, curled up on a coat.

A familiar sight from one's bedroom window while dressing in the morning was Jenny seated on the grass beside a man who was employed digging up the turf and heather as a preparation for flower-beds. While he dug up the yellow soil and shovelled it into his barrow Jenny sat and gazed, apparently deeply interested. When he put down his spade, and taking up the barrow, wheeled it away, Jenny accompanied him, trotting beside the barrow. When he returned with the empty barrow, Jenny was usually to be seen seated inside. Occasionally the man would put down his spade, and the pair would exchange remarks and caresses, Jenny stretching up to lick his face and tell him what a nice man she thought him.

When her master came back from South Africa it was supposed that he would at once send for Genesis, and start the dog-farm. In view of this pending departure she was made more of than ever. "Jenny, my love, are you going to leave us?" and "Jenkins, my angel, what shall we do without you?" was the sort of greeting she received on

entering the room. Jenny's master, however, made it a point never to do anything that was expected of him. Instead of sending for Genesis and starting a dog-farm, he took to himself a wife and went off on a honeymoon. The latter half of the honeymoon was spent within two miles of Jenny's abode. And as it was still thought he must be pining for her, after affectionate and tender good-byes, she was taken over the day after they arrived and delivered to her master. The next morning when the family were seated at breakfast, enter Genesis panting, as if she had run for miles, and waggling as if she expected applause. "I've come back! I've come back!" she seemed to say as she waggled round the table. The explanation came later in the day, when Jenny's quondam master and new mistress appeared. Genesis had been so bored, they said, that they did not know what to do with her. She kept bringing them foot-stools, and sofa cushions, and clothes brushes, and expecting them to play with her, and when they ceased to take any notice of her they were interrupted by seeing her put her head in the air and give a low howl of the deepest *ennui*. And in the morning, as soon as the doors were opened, she had bolted down the garden-path and disappeared.

I believe it was this rebuff on the part of Genesis that dealt the final death-blow to the dog-farm.

XI

ABEL AND HIS FRIENDS

It was after Marianne went away that Abel made friends with "the lady who lives down the road." We called her so because we did not know her name. How the friendship arose I know not. For it happened while we were away for the summer. When we came back we were informed that Abel had made friends with an old lady who lived down the road, and went for walks with her and her two dogs every day. My own opinion is, that finding things a trifle dull while we were away, and walks few and far between, he had made up his mind to find a walking companion for himself. And that the old lady and her two dogs happening to pass the gate while this determination was upon him, he had quietly slipped out and tacked himself on.

I have frequently known dogs, when hard up for a walk, watch the passers-by in this way till they saw

some one to their liking obviously going for a walk, when they would quietly slip out and follow them. Once, when starting, a party of six, for a twenty-mile bicycle ride, we were followed by a most attractive sheep-dog, who happened to be seated at his gate as we passed. For the first couple of miles he pretended he was not following us. He kept some way behind, and always on the other side, and when any of us glanced at him, appeared to be very intent on some investigation of his own. But when we were well out in the country, and concealment was no longer necessary, he gave himself up unaffectedly to the enjoyment of the run ; galloped beside the bicycles, dividing his attentions gracefully between all six ; had tea with us at the inn—a large bowl of water, and a snooze in front of the inn fire—and accompanied us home. We left him at his own front gate, with affectionate farewells and many regrets, and he did his best to convey to us with eyes and tail that he had had a thoroughly enjoyable afternoon.

We were not curious to inquire into the origin of the Schipperke's new friendship, however. What concerned us was to find that it was of so absorbing a nature that he could think of nothing else. He spent most of his time at the gate watching for the old lady and her two dogs. Frequently he watched

in vain. When this was the case he would walk about in a bored, listless sort of way, as if he found things extremely flat. More often, in a moment that we knew not of, he would disappear, and after being absent for an hour or so would come back in high spirits, much pleased with himself and the world in general.

It was some time before I actually saw the old lady and her two dogs. I believe she seldom passed the gate. Indeed, my observations led me to infer that her usual walk lay along a road which crossed ours some yards down and led into the country, and which we could just see by craning our necks over the gate. Abel, by putting his nose as far as possible between the bars, could only get an imperfect view of a corner of the road. And I am inclined to believe that either his longing to see her sharpened his senses to an abnormal degree, or that he became aware that she and her dogs were crossing the road, by some occult means known only to dogs. On the occasion on which I first saw them, I happened to be passing at the moment when Abel, uttering a little squeal of recognition, bolted through a hole in the wall and tore off down the road. I looked over the gate in the direction in which he had gone, and saw moving along the cross-road a little procession that reminded me of those black silhouettes one sees in



German picture-books. First a lady, whose slight stoop of the shoulders led me to infer that she was elderly ; then, following closely on her heels, a sedate collie, with drooping head and tail ; and then, giving a neat finish to the picture, a small and very fat King Charles's spaniel. And between them and me, a small black Schipperke, whirling along the road *ventre à terre*, as if he had been propelled from a canon. It was useless to call him back. I made the attempt, but I doubt whether he even heard me, so obviously were all his powers of mind and body concentrated on the effort to reach the procession before it had disappeared round the corner. I gave up calling, and watched the race with suspended breath. And my irritation at his disobedience was tempered by the satisfaction of seeing him arrive just as the tip of the King Charles's tail was disappearing from sight.

It may be thought arbitrary, and a want of consideration on my part, but I felt that this new friendship of Abel's must be discouraged. I could not have him wandering all over the country with friends of his own choosing, who, for aught I knew, might find his companionship an annoyance. So, though once he had started, I could not resist watching the race with interest, I always took pains to chastise him when he returned. And if I happened

to be in time would order him peremptorily to come back. I must say that he showed on these occasions a determination to have his own way and a disregard of my wishes that was exasperating. I have seen him on an occasion when the old lady passed the gate, get through the hole as if to investigate something in the road. When I called him back, he pretended to be stone deaf, and while still occupied in sniffing about, contrived almost imperceptibly to drift down the road in the direction she had taken. Then when he was almost beyond earshot he would set off at a gallop, and catch her up.

On one occasion I saw the party return from their walk. I was in the garden near the mulberry tree, which is separated from the road by a hawthorn hedge. Through the hedge something caught my eye with a note of familiarity, and I approached and looked over the hawthorn bushes into the road. It was the little procession coming home from their walk. Instead, however, of walking single file, as I had always seen them on other occasions, they were walking two and two—the old lady and the collie in front, the Schipperke and the King Charles's spaniel behind. There was something so quaint about the pair behind, the demure way in which they walked along side by side, that I followed them up the road, inside the hedge, smiling to myself. It seemed to



me that Abel was posing—trying to adapt himself to the spirit of the trio, doing his best to live up to the staid decorum with which they crawled along. All three—the lady, the collie, and the King Charles—were obviously elderly. And so strenuous was Abel's effort to harmonize with the group that any one would have thought he was elderly too.

When they reached the gate the old lady stooped down and patted Abel, and apparently said some farewell words to him, which he stood on his hind-legs to receive. She then opened the gate, motioned him inside, shut the gate, and turning round, began to wend her way down the road again, followed by the collie and the King Charles, but leaving Abel behind, looking wistfully through the bars at the retreating trio. I was so touched by his appealing little figure that I almost made up my mind that he should go his own way for the future, and that I would interfere no more with his friendships.

On second thoughts, however, I felt that discipline must be maintained, and I continued my course of opposition. After several months of warfare I was obliged to admit myself beaten. For tenacity of purpose, indeed, I have come to the conclusion that the Schipperke is unrivalled. Though he does not accompany the old lady and her two dogs quite so often as he did (which may be due to the fact that

she offers him less encouragement), he shows plainly that he has no intention of giving her up. He does not watch for her at the gate. Nor does he get through the original hole in the wall. But he watches his opportunity, and when he thinks no one is looking slips through a hole in a remote corner of the garden, of which he believes nobody is aware but himself.

Sometimes when I am out on my bicycle I catch sight of him and his friends walking sedately along. When this happens I look the other way. So does Abel. We feel a certain delicacy about meeting under the circumstances.



XII

THE HEART OF THE COPSE

THE copse begins on the top of the hill, slips down the slope till it reaches the level, and spreads itself out in the valley, where it lies lazily in the sun.

I went through a little moss-grown wooden gate, and found myself in one of the grassy paths that wind in and out among the clumps of slender, feathery trees; paths with mossy banks in which, amid a tangle of brambles and the brown leaves of last autumn, nestle primroses, dog-violets, wood-sorrel, and wild strawberries. Now and then I came upon maroon patches of last year's heather, or a gorse bush flashed its golden yellow in my eyes.

On either side slender branches grew just above my head. Here and there tall trees broke away and spread their leaves clear above the rest. But for the most part constant cutting had kept the copse

ever young and near the ground. Here and there clearings, with knots of trunks cut off close to the ground, showed that the axe had not long since passed that way. The trees were mostly birches, willows, hazels, and young oaks, with here and there a larch or a fir tree. Seen from a little distance the general colour was a pale, misty maroon, with a faint promise of green, that seemed to come and go in the sunshine, dusted over with the gold and silver green of soft, fluffy catkins. These fascinating things dangling from slender stems almost brushed my cheek as I walked. The copse was full of them. Spring in this spot seemed to have breathed its very soul into catkins and primroses. If I looked up thousands of catkins warm with sunshine nodded at me from the branches, thousands of primroses smiled at me from the banks if I looked down.

The grassy path sloped gently upwards, other paths branching right and left every few yards, luring one's steps by the beauty of their spring covered banks. I turned down one, a mere track carpeted with brambles and brown leaves, and after walking for a few minutes found myself in a circular clearing near the bottom of the slope. Sunshine was in undisturbed possession of the spot, and lay there warm and lazy, making love to the spring and drawing the scent out of the earth, the flowers, and



the piles of cut wood, till the air was delicious with a soft pulsing fragrance. I sank on to a bed of moss and trailing ivy near the edge of the clearing and began to absorb it.

Behind me was a jungle of copse. Looking through among the tree trunks I could see tufts of anemones and wood-sorrel. Near me, a tree covered with fluffy yellow catkins cast a dancing shadow on the ground. Beneath me lay the circular clearing. The trees had been chopped off clean and smooth, leaving clumps of white wood where the trunks had been felled with a single, sloping blow. Round each clump lay a few white chips; and two picturesque stacks of cut wood, beneath a young oak, still bare of leaves, were the spoils. Some of the clumps that had been felled last year had already sent up bunches of slender withies, trimmed with little green buds. The ground was carpeted with a matting of creeping ivy, brambles, moss, brown leaves, and sticks. The ivy and brambles trailed over the ground, creeping in and out among the chopped trunks, and now and then taking a run up the stem of one of the birches or oaks that had been left standing. Wherever they left the tiniest space, tufts of primroses and wood violets pushed through. They showed a preference for the crannies, nooks, and corners, in about the clumps of chopped off trunks. There was

something almost coquettish in the way they peeped out from these little hollows, choosing a background of moss, trailing ivy, and the bark of tree trunks.

Further down, where the ground grew level, thousands of dainty wood anemones had collected, and were spreading a carpet of soft green leaves, dotted with shining white stars. All round the clearing the trees grew thick and close, as if to shield the spot from observation, foster its seclusion, protect its silence. At the other side a few young larch trees made sprays of pale green against the hazels and willows. At one place the thick growth parted slightly, and I could see gorse bushes, dark green splashed with gold, crowding down to the gap as if to look through and see what the sun was doing. Lower down another gap in the catkins and birches gave me a distant view of hills and slopes. The nearer ones had the pale maroon tinge of the copse-wood; the further ones were shrouded in misty blue, with here and there a wisp of opalescence.

I was in the very heart of the copse, so remote from the sound of human voices that it seemed as if a languorous silence brooded over the spot. It was, however, a silence full of sound. Birds sang and piped and twittered, and insects buzzed as far as my ear could reach, making a harmony so softly permeating that no corner was left without sound,



and blended so closely that it seemed like the pulsing of a great heart. As my ears drank in almost unconsciously the drowsy hum a sound suddenly detached itself from the level pulsing—the sound that always insists on a hearing above all woodland sounds, the liquid "jug-jug" of the nightingale.

"Comes in April, sings in May, and in June flies away," I murmured. He is before his time. But how can he help it on a day like this! Perhaps, too, he thinks no one can hear him far away here in the heart of the copse.

I sat on beneath the yellow catkins, and dreamily watched a ladybird climbing a dog-violet, and walking in and out among the leaves. The setting of green and purple showed up his red coat with its black spots conspicuously and became him well. The plant was a small one. There was only one blossom, on which he was moving about when I first caught sight of him. As I watched him he walked down the stalk, and paid a visit of investigation into the centre of each of the green leaves, which were curled up like cornucopias. Then making a bridge of a brown hazel twig he crossed over to a wood anemone that grew close by. Here he lingered some minutes, wandering in and out among the leaves and blossoms, his coat of mail shining in the sun. Then by way of a couple of brown leaves and a bit of fern-

like moss he wandered to a little wood-sorrel, whose young leaves had not yet changed their baby copper colour for transparent green.

But he was wandering further and further away from me. I wanted him back, so I picked him up, rather abruptly, and deposited him again on the wood-violet. The sudden rush took his breath away. He fell off the blossom, and catching hold of a leaf clung to it desperately for a second, and then remained motionless for about half-a-minute. I could almost see his heart beating. Then he suddenly woke up and began to run. Before I interfered with him he had been idly loafing. Now he ran—scuttled, indeed,—so rapidly that he sometimes tripped over things. There was no doubt about his direction. It was away from me. Instinct seemed to teach him that my way lay danger. Over dead leaves, twigs, grass, and wild flowers he scuttled till he reached a haven of refuge in one of the clumps of tree trunks left by the axe. Here I caught sight of his red back occasionally, wandering in and out among a pile of dead leaves. I wished I could apologize, make him understand in some way that I had not meant to hurt him. What did he think had happened? I asked myself. And then I fell to musing on the vastness of human ignorance, and the dulness of the facts we think we know



compared with those we know we don't. What do I know about that ladybird, for instance, but a few prosaic facts about his anatomy and the large and obvious habits of his life.

If I could only read his tiny thoughts and understand his microscopic plans!

XIII

BETTY

THOUGH a lover of dogs, I must admit that I have sometimes come across people, who I could not but feel, held exaggerated views of their importance. This is especially the case with the family of which Betty is a member, and indeed, as they all honestly believe, the chief ornament.

So exalted a position does this tailless sheep-dog occupy—so unanimous are the other members of the family in doing her bidding, gratifying her wishes, humouring her whims, and applauding her every gesture—that it might almost be said that the basis of the family constitution was the divine right of Betty.

Why Betty should have singled me out for notice above all the other friends of the family I have never been able to understand. Though, as I said, I am a lover of dogs, I have never taken that



exaggerated view of their importance that is held by Betty's owners. I can look at a dog without ejaculating nonsensical terms of endearment, and I am not at all given to kissing dogs. Betty, I will allow, is a pretty, sweet-tempered dog with engaging ways, but otherwise is much as other dogs.

My first introduction was not calculated to prepossess me in her favour. I arrived on a visit to the family late one evening, and, being very tired after a long journey, retired almost at once to rest. The next morning I breakfasted in bed, and held what is known in the family as a "matinée"—that is, members of the family dropped in one after the other to sit on my bed and talk. With them came Betty. She behaved very well till one of the family, with a turn for practical jokes, pointed at me, and said something to her in an undertone. With a bound Betty was on the bed. I hid myself under the bedclothes and shrieked. Whereupon she proceeded to try and dig me out with her front paws, as if I had been a rabbit—apparently to the great delight of the family, who laughed uproariously. It was not until my shrieks became frantic that one of them lifted her down, and with a playful pat instead of what she deserved—a good whipping—dismissed her from the room. As I said, this introduction did not prepossess me in her favour. Indeed, for the

first two or three days of my visit, I looked at her somewhat askance, and when called upon, as I frequently was, to admire her, protested that I preferred to do so at a safe distance. She was what I should have described as a silky-haired black and white collie without a tail. The family called her a bob-tailed sheep-dog, accounting for her want of resemblance to the shaggy grey sheep-dogs known as bob-tails by the explanation that she was a "sport," whatever that might be. They further informed me that her pedigree was immaculate, that her ancestors had come over with William the Conqueror, and that at a recent dog show there had been a dog "exactly like Betty," for which the owner wanted five hundred pounds. My suggestion that they should "realize" Betty was greeted with scornful derision. Sell Betty! Why, they would not part with her for her weight in diamonds!

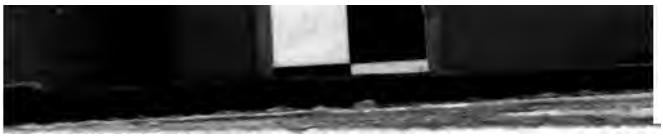
Whether Betty guessed that my attitude towards her was not such as she had been accustomed to, and took an interest in me on that account, I am not prepared to say, though I think it possible. But on the third day after my arrival she walked across the room to where I sat quietly reading a book, put a paw confidingly on my lap, and looked up at me with her silky ears back, and what I am bound to say was a very sweet expression in her brown eyes.

Beyond responsively smoothing her head, I should have hardly noticed the incident, had it not been for the effect it produced in the family. Their surprise would have taken the conceit out of a less humble-minded individual than myself. Betty, I was told, was the least undemonstrative dog in the world, and was *never* known to take the least notice of strangers. I could quite well see that the incident raised me a good peg in the family esteem. On the day following this over-rated incident, being something of a pedestrian, I announced my intention of taking a good walk. Betty was lying outside the front door, and as I passed I whistled to her to come too. She bounded to her feet and followed me, which was nothing more than I had expected. I had asked her to come for a walk. Dogs love walks, and there was nothing unusual in her accepting the invitation.

After we had gone a few steps I realized that it was not Betty who was following me, but I who was following Betty. She firmly and emphatically took the lead, and as she appeared to know the country, whereas I was a stranger, I thought it best to acquiesce. So I followed her. She kept three or four yards ahead of me, and every now and then, especially when she took a new turning (which she always did in a hurried way, as if she was afraid

I might pass it by), looked back to see if I was coming. After walking about three miles I sighted the object of our walk in a gleam of water between pine trees. Betty no sooner caught sight of it than she was off with a bound, leaving me to follow as best I could. When I reached it I gave Betty all credit for having taken me to so beautiful a spot.

It was a clear, cool, deep pond, in a charmingly secluded spot, surrounded by fir trees and beeches. Betty was disporting herself far out in the middle, swimming round and round, splashing the water about, taking great mouthfuls of it, yelping, and generally behaving like any other mortal who is enjoying a swim on a hot day. At one moment the antics and yelping became so frantic that the awful thought occurred to me that she was drowning. I am happy to say that I did not hesitate one moment as to the course to pursue, but began flinging off my clothes preparatory to plunging in after her. Whether such a course was rendered imperative by the awful vision that flashed through my mind of the family when I returned to inform them that Betty was drowned I am not prepared to say, but I am inclined to attribute it to natural humanity. Before I had got further than my hat and jacket, however, Betty was lazily swimming towards me—calm enjoyment



of her bath in her eye. She sprang out on to the bank, shook herself all over me, barked some ecstatic remarks and plunged in, and swimming out to the middle of the pond, indulged in the same antics again. I found to my cost that one woman might take a dog to the water, but that ten could not get it away again. More than an hour did I spend trying to entice Betty away from that pond—coaxing, persuading, commanding, and making feints of going off and leaving her. Not till she had bathed until she could bathe no longer did she consent to come away and show me the way home again.

"You don't mean to say that Betty followed you!" the family cried, when we re-appeared. "No," I said, "I followed Betty." "Why," they cried, disregarding my correction, "she has never done such a thing in her life as go for a walk alone with a stranger!" It took them some days to get over this extraordinary mark of Betty's favour, and I estimate that it took me up six pegs at a jump.

After this, hardly a day passed without Betty giving me a new proof of her esteem. She gave me impromptu paws and licks, and greeted me with effusive waggles when I returned from a walk without her, and she carried my train for me when I went down-stairs. This I interpreted, the first time she did it, into an attempt to bite my heels, and



rewarded it with a tap and a severe "*Don't*, Betty!" to the horror of the family, who informed me that in carrying my train, Betty was conferring on me the highest possible honour.

But perhaps I reached my zenith in their esteem when, after being abroad for six months, I paid the family another visit, and Betty greeted my arrival by *fetching a boot*. The uninitiated will need some explanation of this mystery. Betty, it will be remembered, is devoid of that appendage which Nature has bestowed upon her kind for the expressing of their feelings—a tail. Consequently when her feelings become "too many" for her, she is at a disadvantage, having no wherewithal to express them. Therefore she invented a substitute for a wagging tail in a little action which apparently answers the double purpose of a vent to her feelings and a means of conveying her sentiments. She hastens to a corner of the hall, where the family keeps a row of snow-boots, seizes one of them in her mouth, and trots up and down with it, accompanying the action with a waggling motion of her hind-quarters which is her nearest approach to wagging her tail. I am told that the importance of an arrival may be gauged precisely by the amount of ground Betty will cover with the snow-boot, and whether she takes it up-stairs or not. But that on no occasion previous



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to my arrival had she been known to fetch one for any one who was not an actual member of the family.

As for my feelings towards Betty, I will not deny that she has "a way with her"—that there is a mixture of dignity and grace about her movements, a wayward, waggling wilfulness about her behaviour generally that is not without charm. Considering, too, the way she has been brought up—that she has never been chastised in all her life, that the severest reproach I ever heard levelled at her was "My *sweetest* Betty!" (with a world of reproach in "sweetest," it is true)—she is singularly unspoiled. Also I must admit that she is a dog of great discrimination.



XIV

EARLY JUNE

If I might recall one month of the twelve and bid her repeat her dance of days, my choice would be the month of June. And the days that I would have her linger over would be the early days, when she is still green June rather than the latter days when as "flaming June" she dances out decked in flowers. There is a serene vitality about early June—born, perhaps, of an assurance that the year is about to reach its zenith, that ere many days have passed it will reach the topmost pinnacle of its summer glory —that green seems to express more aptly than any other colour.

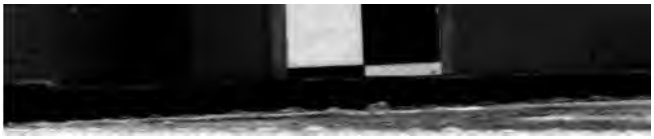
This year it almost seems as if the earth were preparing for a more glorious outburst than usual—as if it were holding back its colour, putting all its strength into increasing its foundations of green, nourishing, strengthening, spreading them—so that



when the time comes June may flame as she never flamed before. Never has early June seemed more green, nor the green more full of life and vigour. In the garden one walks beneath a canopy of thick transparent green, shady and cool as the depths in which mermaidens lie. Though out beyond the trees the sun beats hot on the cropped lawn, beneath the trees one may dip one's hands into long grass as into a cool river.

In that spot of earth where lies my garden the lull in colour, which there always is in early June, seems more marked than usual. The lilacs, which a few weeks ago were weighed down with great bunches of colour, are green bushes once more, with wisps of brown gauze instead of lilac. The May has lost its pinkness, and the laburnum has begun to hang untidily, and has lost its golden sheen. In the flower-beds green is rampant, and the patches of colour are quite subordinate to the abundant foliage of the plants, which spreads and puts forth leaves with all its might, as if determined to flaunt its colour from a splendid background of green. The annuals are rushing up so thickly that it is impossible to thin them, and even the grass on the little lawn, which is apt to be sulky and "contrairy," and to turn brown if the sun but looks at it, has taken to growing like a meadow.

Out in the country, away from the garden, the landscape is so vividly green that it reminds one of those Impressionist pictures where the crudeness of the colour seems (to speak paradoxically) overdone. The green crops seem almost too green, the yellow haystacks too yellow, to be real. And yet the colour asserts its reality by forcing us not only to look at it, but to absorb it through our eyes till we feel suffused with green and yellow. A week ago I walked in the borderland of the Fens, where the country, having lain flat for miles, begins gently to undulate. June was in a lazy, laughing mood. She fanned the clouds about, making queer-shaped blue and purple shadows over the landscape. She hid herself in greyness, wrapped round her like a veil ; then flung it off and flashed with sunshine. Large fields of young green crops spread themselves over the undulating plain, separated here and there by one of ploughed red earth. Windmills and haystacks were dotted about, and yellow roads wound slowly away till they were lost in the horizon. Clouds and sunshine chased each other lazily over the fields, turning the expanse of green from sombre to brilliant verdant, and the haystacks to yellowest gold. It was a day of which one would have said, if one had waked from a sleep of a hundred years to find oneself in its midst, "This must be June."



Once or twice lately it has seemed as if the earth had become impatient of restraint, had felt that she could no longer hold back her luxuriance, but must burst forth into flaming June before her time. Last week she fumed and fretted herself into a fever, and for a few hours lay panting in a state of suffocating heat. We lay and panted too, in chairs and hammocks, choosing the coolest, greenest spots we could find. A greyness came over everything—a thick palpable greyness that made us feel as if we were being stifled in a tent. The air had that peculiar tent-like quality, when sounds and smells seem to have lost their vibration, and to lie motionless and dead. Everything was still and listening—birds, beasts, insects, and human beings were waiting for the crisis in the earth's fever which we felt must come soon. It came with a crash which rent the stifling canopy, and let through some heavy drops of rain. For some minutes lightning flashed and thunder crashed, and then the rain fell in earnest. Nature's taut nerves relaxed. She took breath, and began to stir. Everything which had lain still, listening and waiting for the crisis, began to move. The birds began to whisper, then to chirp aloud, and in a few minutes stillness and heaviness had given place to movement and exhilaration.

The delicious cool, light feeling in the air which

follows these outbursts makes it impossible to be still. Sap begins to quiver and rush, and everything which has been, so to speak, holding its breath, stirs from its irksome position and begins to move about. Rustling and chattering goes on everywhere, and sounds, instead of lying prone on the earth, heavy as lead, rise up and are diffused in millions of tiny rivulets, so that the atmosphere seems to scintillate with them.

Tom Tug and Abel came out of the house, where they had lain like panting doormats, and sniffed. "Come! This is something like weather!" they said, and promptly gave chase to a strange cat. I left them and walked round the garden. When I came back, they were furiously digging a hole in a large empty flower-bed, and putting their heads in and taking deep sniffs. I reprimanded them severely, but I could not help sympathizing with them. I knew exactly how they felt. I was feeling it myself —that I *must* dig a hole, burrow into it like a rabbit, be a plant, an animal, feel the sap rushing in my veins, take part in the growing that was going on everywhere after the rain—identify myself in some way with this great creature, Nature.

Being a human being and not a dog I have learnt restraint. I did not give way to my impulse and then and there dig a hole with my paws and burrow

into it. I went decorously and found gardening gloves and a fork and dug a series of holes in the empty flower-bed, and into each hole I put a little plant. In other words, I did some bedding out. I planted out several dozen scented verbenas, heliotropes, and crinkly-leaved geraniums that I have been treasuring up since early spring, till a favourable opportunity occurred for putting them out. Of these sweet-smelling green things I cannot have too many. In the warm southern garden of my childhood they grew out of doors like shrubs, and one could pick great branches of them. Early association has given the scent a sort of intoxication of memories, so that they are to me among the most delicious plants that grow in a garden. Though they will not grow to the shrubs of my childhood, in a sunny position, they will develop into nice little bushes, from which I hope to gather, if not branches, at least good-sized bunches.

The June day began to smile placidly as I dug and planted. As I took the plants one by one from their pots, shook out the tangled network of roots that had been so cramped, and put them into the brown hole, where they would have room to stretch themselves as much as they liked, the sun began to shine so brightly that by the time I had finished the surface of the ground was beginning to look quite dry and

powdery. I went and fetched my watering-can from the greenhouse, and prepared to fill it at the pump, when—"Excuse me," said a nice plump cloud that was resting overhead, and had apparently been watching my operations; "I think I can save you that trouble." And forthwith there descended a most elegant little shower.

Nature occasionally shows a disposition to oblige that fairly startles one.



XV

A FRUSTRATED ENDEAVOUR

THERE is a certain form of nightmare to which I was prone in my youth, and which still occasionally visits me for my sins, in which the particular form of mental torture that constitutes it a nightmare is a baffling inability to attain some trivial and unimportant object, such as the arriving at a party, or the catching of a train. Everything combines to distract, hinder, and delay, while the object claims one's purpose with a maddening persistency. The worst feature of the dream is its length. It seems to extend over a week of nights—and one awakens thoroughly exhausted in body and soul, just when the object seems to be, for the first time, really within reach.

A nightmare is but a nightmare after all; and there are compensations in the inevitable waking. But when the ordinary waking day takes upon itself

the manners of a nightmare, human nature has a right to complain.

It was a regular nightmare day with me—one of those hot, scorching days, when the heat seems to take the starch out of one's moral being, so that one cannot make up one's mind about anything, and when the trifling aims and objects of the day take to evading one, and hiding behind every obstacle that presents itself.

My object was the trifling one of going to tea with Mrs. Jones. It had, however, this much of importance in it, that I had been trying to call on Mrs. Jones for six months, and had finally taken the strong measure of making an appointment to go to tea with her on this particular afternoon. From early morn circumstances seemed to have formed an alliance to prevent my carrying out this harmless design. I was called upon to refuse no fewer than three invitations in the course of the morning, each suggesting that I should fall in with some plan wholly incompatible with my taking tea with Mrs. Jones—and all three of superior attractions. Immediately after lunch my friends kept turning up with schemes for the employment of my afternoon, which would make my visit to Mrs. Jones an impossibility. I resisted them all, feeling more and more determined after each victory that I

would die rather than give up my visit to Mrs. Jones.

I went to dress at four o'clock, and experienced one of those tiresome fits of vacillation as to what I should wear that are characteristic of this form of nightmare. I put on a cool muslin ; then, thinking that there was too much wind to admit of my bicycling in it, I took it off and put on a blue cloth coat and skirt. As soon as I had attired myself in this, it occurred to me that it was a ridiculous costume for a broiling hot day. So I took it off and put on a white linen. The same vacillation accompanied my choice of hat, veil, and gloves. I tried on every hat and veil I possessed and emptied the whole of my glove drawer on to the bed before I could find anything that did not seem to me quite impossible. I had told the maid, when I went up to dress, that I was not at home should any one call. But I had not contemplated the possibility of meeting with visitors on the doorstep, which was what occurred. Though they protested against keeping me when I was just going out, their expressions and general demeanour belied the protest. I flatter myself that I understand the art of social hypocrisy sufficiently to have put them quite at their ease. They came in and stayed a good half-hour, dawdling over their tea in a manner that was truly exasperating.

When they had gone, I had another attack of vacillation. Should I run the risk of sun-stroke and bicycle, or enjoy the comfort of a parasol and walk? I finally decided that a parasol was quite indispensable, and started to walk. I verily believe that on my way from my own house to that of Mrs. Jones, a distance of about a mile and a half, I met every one whom I had ever known. They all showed a tendency to stop and talk—a tendency which, owing to the limpness of my moral fibre, I was totally unable to resist. I cast anchor and engaged in desultory conversation about the weather with six friends and one dozen mere acquaintances before I turned into the long road, at the end of which was the terrace in which lived Mrs. Jones. It was here that I met Mr. and Miss Brown. They were marching along in a brisk, determined manner, quite out of keeping with the weather, and passed me with two affable, but quite business-like bows. I continued my walk till I reached a point where the roads crossed, and here I was attracted by the sight of Miss Brown's puppy engaged in conversation with an amiable-looking collie. I knew the puppy quite well. It is of a peculiar breed—something between a dandy dinmont, a dachshund, and an Irish terrier, and has the engaging manners characteristic of all puppies. I have a weakness for puppies,



and find Miss Brown's puppy quite irresistible. Apparently so did the collie, for he seemed quite ready to respond to the puppy's invitation to stop and have a game, and would probably have done so if a somewhat peremptory whistle from his master had not caused him to canter off after him. The puppy looked after him for a second or two, and then, recovering from the transitory emotion, suddenly looked round and discovered that he was lost.

No sight is to me more moving than that of a lost puppy. Miss Brown's puppy, with a look of frantic bewilderment, its ears and eyebrows well raised, looked now in this direction, now in that; craned its little neck, as if it thought it might possibly see over the tops of the houses, trees, and passers-by; scanned the faces and sniffed at the legs of the passers-by with supplicating anxiety, and then in an *accès* of wild terror tore off down the road in the wrong direction as hard as it could go. I could not do less than run after it. Luckily, it stopped when it had gone a few yards and proceeded to scan the passers-by, and I caught it up. By dint of encouraging it with my voice and gestures, I got it back to the cross-roads, and pointed down the road at the retreating backs of its master and mistress, which, as they moved along with a methodical,



rhythmical swing, looked as uncompromising and unsympathetic as two brick walls. The puppy ran a few yards and stopped. I ran after it, and tried to encourage it to go on.

"There they are!" I said. "Go on; you'll soon catch them up." It shook aside my interference. "Don't bother me," it seemed to say; "don't you see I'm half-crazy with anxiety!" Then it evidently made up its mind that they had not gone that way, for it turned and began running in the opposite direction.

This I could not allow. I ran after it again, calling "Pup! Pup! Pup." (I did not know its name.) "Here they are! Come along!" and I rubbed my first finger and thumb towards it encouragingly. It acknowledged the overture by running up to smell me, and ascertain if by chance I had any connection with any of its belongings. It apparently decided that I had not, for it turned and began running in a fourth direction. I was beginning to feel out of breath and hot beyond endurance, and to wonder whether I had not better give it up. But visions of a poor little lost puppy being ill-treated by cruel boys, or spending the night howling on a strange doorstep decided me. I ran after it again. This time it ran so fast and so

far that when I came up with it (again drawn up, and submitting the far distance to a painful and strained scrutiny) I could only gasp conciliatory interjections and rub my first finger and thumb at it.

Despair had apparently taken hold of it. It turned and looked up at me with mutely supplicating eyes, and when I continued to make conciliatory gestures, sat down on the pavement at my feet, looked up at me with its ears back, and dumbly besought me to protect it. It had apparently been in a pond, and then rolled in the dust, for its legs and what my small niece calls its "underneath" were thickly covered with mud. I looked at my white gloves and clean linen coat. Then I looked at the puppy's beseeching eyes, and casting all other considerations to the wind, *I picked it up*. I tucked it under my arm, and set off, half running, half walking, to pursue those two exasperating backs. When I had run about five minutes, I saw them come to a sudden halt, and begin retracing their steps, looking about much as the puppy had done.

Not till I was within ten yards of them, though I had frantically brandished my parasol, did they recognize me and the puppy. To do them justice they were then profuse in apologies and thanks. The puppy betrayed a disheartening ingratitude.



He went off jumping wildly at his mistress's elbow without flinging me so much as a glance.

As for me, I looked at my watch, and then at my muddy coat and still muddier glove, got into a cab, and drove home feeling that fate had scored.



XVI

AN OLD TORTOISE

If any one were to ask me if I had ever kept a tortoise, I should answer unhesitatingly, "Yes—I have got one now." And taking them out into the garden I should show them old Scratch-grass creeping about on the lawn.

"This 'ere old scratch-grass, once you get it into the ground there's no gettin' it out again; seeds wonnerful!" And from this remark, not knowing his real name, we took to calling him "Old Scratch-grass."

We got him in, in the early days of summer, to weed the lawn. No one knew where he came from. But he happened to want a job (having been laid up all the winter, as we afterwards learnt, with "the rheumatics,") and we happened to want some one to weed the lawn. And fate threw us in each other's way. He was engaged at first for "a day or two."

He arrived early one morning, and was given a kitchen fork and a bit of sacking, and settled down on his knees to wrestle with the plantains and thistles that had been making such way on the lawn that they threatened to drive out the grass altogether. But somehow or other the day or two ran to a week or two, and then to a month or two. And now the question is whether we shall ever be able to send old Scratch-grass away. For we have grown so accustomed to seeing him walking about on his hands and knees that we can hardly imagine the garden without him.

Old Scratch-grass is sixty-five years old. He is a small, thick-set, weather-beaten man, the colour of dust. He wears dust-coloured corduroys, well hitched up by dust-coloured braces, over a dust-coloured shirt. Long and intimate connection with the soil has given him a rocky, rugged look—as if he were some product of the earth; or one of those insects that, in order to protect itself from its enemies, assumes the colour and appearance of the ground it walks upon. There is something in the quiet unobtrusive way he creeps about the garden that suggests a tortoise. His voice, however, quite belies this suggestion. It is loud enough to crack a drum, and coming from so small and quiet a person quite startled me the first time I heard it. When



you ask him a question suddenly, there is a pause, during which he turns aside and ejects something (which I imagine to be tobacco juice) from his mouth. Then, when having made up your mind he is deaf, you are preparing to ask again in a louder key, he suddenly answers in a voice like a trumpet blast.

Old Scratch-grass's industry and power of work are such as to inspire the weak and volatile with awe. Work, sheer hard work, is expressed in every line, muscle, and fibre of his old person—in his dusty corduroys that have seen him through many a year of toil, in his grey, dusty, hob-nailed boots, and especially in his dusty, knotty, short-fingered hands. If men were measured by the number of years of steady toil they have gone through, old Scratch-grass's record would, I feel sure, be high. A rugged, persistent industry is expressed in every movement and gesture. Come upon him at any hour of the day, you will always find him with every muscle and thought intent on toil. Even during the scorching heat of the past few days, that has driven the most industrious under the trees to shelter and mop their brows, old Scratch-grass was to be seen out under the baking sun, tortoise-wise on hands and knees, digging out the plantains with a kitchen-fork.

For the first few weeks after his introduction we

looked upon him merely as a sort of old tortoise; and it came upon one as a revelation that underneath the rugged shell was a bit of soft humanity; that old Scratch-grass had a mind and a heart, a history and memories to link him to the past, and affections to link him to the present; that as he knelt wrestling with the plantains and thistles, he was looking back over more than sixty years of life that meandered all over England, spent for the most part in helping to force great cities out of the soil, and new railways and canals out of the rock. That some of the years had been spent in agricultural labour, we gathered from his knowledge of weeds, which seemed inexhaustible. It was impossible to puzzle him with a weed. He had a name for each one. It was from him I learnt the name of the tiresome feathery-leaved weed that was spreading all over the lawn and threatening, with the thistles and plantains, to annihilate everything. "That's yarrow, m'm. Yarrow. Terrible stuff for spreading. Once it gets into the ground, you can't do nothin' with it, except cut it down. Spreads wonnerful, wonnerful!"

"Wonnerful" is his favourite expression. Most things are "wonnerful." But the most "wonnerful" of all is the great Manchester Ship Canal, at which, in company with hundreds of others, he worked for four years. He is as proud of his small share in that

stupendous work as could be the engineer who planned it. "Yes, m'm. Four years I worked on the Manchester Ship Canal, hewing and blasting. Helped to blast the last rock, m'm! Wonnerful piece of work, m'm. You should see the bridges, m'm. They're a sight to see. Wonnerful!"

Of the power of human labour old Scratch-grass makes a god. What man can do by sheer energy and toil stirs him to enthusiasm. To hear him dilate on the wonder of that great canal almost inspires one to a worship of humanity. A poet might envy him his grasp of the idea of the titanic force that—thousands working like one—wrestles with rock and river and forces them into subjection.

It is worth all the money to give old Scratch-grass sixpence in order to see what fun he thinks it. Indeed, it was the gift of a humble sixpence that drew the first gleam of sympathy from the old tortoise. It was on the occasion of the village Jubilee tea. Old Scratch-grass was not invited, for he did not belong to the parish. But sixpence more than made up for the disappointment. To see old Scratch-grass eying the coin in the palm of his hand was to realize the power of sixpence. It was extra—over and above the daily bread-money. It meant mere luxury and enjoyment to the amount of sixpence. Also it represented a kind thought towards himself, and I believe

this fact gave it in old Scratch-grass's eyes a peculiar brightness and glamour.

"There now," he said, eying it with a satisfaction that amounted to pride, "I'd far rather have that than the Jubilee tea. That'll buy me half-a-pint of beer and an ounce of tobacco. Do me good, do me good." And the rugged hand dived deep into his trousers pocket with the treasure. "I'm much obliged to you, m'm ; much obliged." And as he looked up one realized that old Scratch-grass had a pair of clear blue eyes, with an expression as ingenuous and confiding as those of a child.

The gift of a shilling to buy a new hat stirred even a greater depth of gratitude. It was one of those baking days when the sun beats down so fiercely that one is almost afraid to venture from beneath the shade of the trees. Armed with a white umbrella I went out to pick roses, and on the grass walk that separates the rose beds found old Scratch-grass at his usual work of weeding, the full heat of the sun blazing fiercely on his old head. An old black felt hat of conical shape had been pulled down behind in an attempt to cover the back of his neck. A little conversation about the heat, and the price of a new hat, ended in the horny hand diving to the bottom of his trousers pocket with a shilling. And the next morning he appeared in a grey wide-awake with a Jubilee



cord of red, white, and blue round it. "Wonnerful, the difference—wonnerful! I feel it as soon as I put it on this mornin'! The old one drew the sun terrible. This one's wonnerful light and cool. And I'm sure I thank you very much indeed for givin' it me—very much indeed." The gratitude in the blue eyes as he looked up from beneath the shade of the new hat was quite touching.

On Sunday old Scratch-grass tramped twenty-four miles to see his daughter—twelve miles there and twelve miles back, with a rest and his dinner and tea between. "Took it easy, m'm; sat down and rested now and then, and had half-a-pint of beer on the way; enjoyed myself very much, m'm," he said when describing the exploit.

XVII

A MOUSE!

I REGARD my cousin Eugenia as a typical specimen of the Average Woman. She has much of the charm and many of the weaknesses of the sex. Among the latter is a nameless horror of mice and spiders. Her "femininity" is as it were thrown into relief by the personality of Jack, her husband, who might very well pose as the Average Man. Indeed, it is customary in the family to allude to them as the Average Woman and the Average Man.

"How is the Average Man?" I asked, when taking tea with her the other afternoon.

"Oh, he is exasperating!" said Eugenia. "Only think! he had the face to tell me again this morning (after *all* our differences on the subject) that a mouse won't *bite!*" That he should so utterly fail to comprehend the terror which the domestic mouse has power to inspire in the feminine breast, as to

imagine that it has anything to do with its biting, seemed to Eugenia to fix so fast a gulf between him, the Average Man, and her, the Average Woman, that it set her wondering whether she could reasonably expect marriage to be anything but a failure.

To do Jack justice, he is not afraid of anything, whether it bites or not. But he can quite understand that one should be afraid of anything capable of hurting one, or doing one a physical injury—such as a tiger, or even to a lesser degree, a wasp. But that any one should be afraid of a creature that has no desire to harm one, that could not if it would, seems to him unreasonable and absurd. He cannot understand, in short, that there are two kinds of terror, reasonable and unreasonable, and that the unreasonable is as real as the reasonable—sometimes more so.

Eugenia has done her best to make him understand and sympathize with the sensations of terror and loathing that the mouse, the spider, and the earwig inspire in her, but has failed miserably. She told him the most horrible story she knew—the thought of which makes her shudder and feel faint—of a friend of hers, who when lying in bed in the middle of the night heard a little plop on the pillow beside her, and then something with legs, that felt like a fat spider, crawled

over her face. He only laughed, and told her one which he considered much more horrible, of a man who, when walking through a jungle in India, looked back and saw a tiger following him and realized that he had nothing with him but an umbrella. But whereas Eugenia could quite realize the feelings of the man in Jack's story, he was utterly unable to realize the feelings of the woman in hers.

Their differences on the subject of mice reached a crisis when they went to the seaside a year ago. Eugenia went down first to engage rooms, and found a set of suitable pleasant rooms that she occupied alone for one night. The first question that suggests itself to Eugenia's mind on going to bed in a strange lodging is always, Are there any mice? and on going to this particular room at night she was struck with dismay to find a series of small holes between the wainscoting and the floor that pointed plainly to the existence of mice. She stood in the middle of the room, feeling helpless and alarmed, and wondering how best to defend herself. Obviously she must stop up all the holes. The chimney-piece was covered with china dogs, pet lambs, and shells. She put all the china dogs and pet lambs with their heads and all the shells with their tails down holes, and was pleased to find that they answered the purpose of blocking the holes admirably, and also that there were just enough to go

round. And she got into bed and went to sleep, congratulating herself on her ingenuity.

But in spite of her precautions, she was awakened in the middle of the night by the unmistakable sound of a mouse scratching about in the fire-place. She lit a candle and peered in the direction of the sound. In the middle of the hearthrug sat the most diminutive mouse she had ever seen, with the very largest ears. It was sitting on its hind-legs apparently curling its moustache and whiskers, and glancing rapidly about it to see if any one was looking. Now, it is only the mouse in certain aspects that Eugenia finds terrifying. Of the mouse in repose, sitting still and curling its whiskers, she tells me she feels no terror. Indeed, she would have no hesitation in picking it up and stroking it, if she felt sure that it would still maintain its attitude of repose. But when it begins to run she becomes rigid with terror. There is something about the noiseless gliding and the lightning pace that is suggestive to her of the very worst form of nightmare—that awful nightmare that was the bane of one's childhood, when *Something* (one was never able to discover what) got quicker and quicker, and quicker and quicker, till one was obliged to scream aloud to prevent all one's nerves, stretched to snapping-point, from giving way and plunging one into some awful abyss of unutterable horrors. When a mouse begins to run Eugenia feels

that that terrible nightmare has caught her again. As she gazed at this diminutive mouse sitting on the hearthrug her whole being was twisted into a terrified note of interrogation. "Is he going to run?" She kept her eyes riveted on him for about five minutes, and then, without thinking what she was doing, she coughed.

The mouse started, looked round, and then it began to run! Eugenia says she has never known a mouse run as that very small mouse ran. Thinking it over afterwards, she came to the conclusion that the china dogs must have had something to do with it. When it found that all its holes were blocked up with china dogs, pet lambs, and shells, it completely lost its head. It ran deliriously round and round the room, apparently neither knowing nor caring where it was running to, and its nightmare speed stretched her nerves to the verge of endurance. She sat rigid and paralyzed, conscious in every fibre of the mouse's wild career, though she only caught lightning glimpses of it as it tore round and round and up and down. It ran six times round the room, then up and down each window curtain and backwards and forwards along the rod at the top, then up and down the bed curtains; then, oh horrors! it plopped on to the bed and ran over her hand. That was the climax. Feminine nature could stand no more. She screamed

aloud, such a scream that it has always surprised her that no one came to her rescue.

Eugenia thinks she must have fainted after that. Certainly she had a moment's unconsciousness, for she closed her eyes. When she opened them again there was a gentle scratching going on on the dressing-table where she had left a paper-bag full of biscuits—the remains of her provision for the journey. The mouse had found them and was quietly eating them as if nothing had happened. She sat up and watched him with a strange feeling of relief. She felt quite sure, somehow, that he would sit there quietly and eat biscuits for the rest of the night and would run no more ; and that early in the morning, when he was quite full of biscuit, he would start quietly on his homeward journey ; and that, having had time to collect his wits, he would avoid the china dogs and find his way without difficulty to the hole by which he had entered. Eugenia sat and watched him, wondering at the mouse-like stupidity with which he laboriously gnawed a hole in the bottom of the bag, instead of going in at the other end, which was wide open. As she watched him, so great was the reaction brought about by his fall from delirious motion to calm repose that she felt quite an impulse of tenderness towards him. There was a piquant wistfulness about him as he sat on the dressing-table beside the comb and brush, holding a

piece of biscuit in his hand, and nibbling it with an air of fastidious delicacy. She even contemplated the possibility of pensioning him off with a biscuit a day, on condition that he should preserve an attitude of repose for the future.

The next day Jack joined her. The first thing he asked was why all the china dogs and lambs were standing on their heads in the corners of the room. "Can't you guess?" asked Eugenia. He said "Mice?" interrogatively.

Eugenia nodded. Then she told him all about it. He laughed immoderately, and then said, "Why, it wouldn't have eaten you." Eugenia looked at him reproachfully and changed the subject with an air of pained dignity. Really, he was hopeless.

But it was his subsequent behaviour which betokened such gross stupidity and want of comprehension, and led to the final rupture. Without saying a word to Eugenia he caught that small mouse in a trap and killed it. Then he came and told her what he had done, and thought she would be pleased. Eugenia gazed at him in dumb horror. "I thought it was best to kill it at once," he said, "or it might have come again to-night, and I knew you loathed it."

"Yes," she said, feeling hopeless and bewildered. And then added a little lamely, "Except when it sat still on the rug, and when it ate biscuits."

"But when it ran!" he persisted.

"Jack!" cried Eugenia, instinctively tucking her legs up on to the chair, "if you dare to mention that mouse again, I shall——" What she did do was to burst into tears. Jack left the room with a puzzled, somewhat injured expression on his face. Since then they have been obliged to make a compact never to mention mice.

"But, I ask you," said Eugenia when telling me the story, "when the Average Man so utterly fails to understand the Average Woman on so vital a subject as mice, how can one ever hope for anything like equality between the sexes?"

XVIII

A 'SPIDERY' EPISODE

EUGENIA's horror of spiders is even more intense than her horror of mice. The following episode which she told me on another occasion I give, as far as possible, in her own words.

"We were spending the usual month in Switzerland, in the usual way—Jack in running up and down mountains with his friend Mr. Robinson, and I in sitting in an hotel at the foot awaiting their mangled remains on a shutter.

"I can see no fun in being tied to a rope and hauled up a mountain and let down again. Beyond the rather poor satisfaction of triumphing over the law of gravity, there seems to me no point in it at all. Consequently I had always firmly resisted the attempts they made to drag me with them on their expeditions—saying that I much preferred gently meandering on the horizontal to wildly zigzagging

up the perpendicular. But on this particular morning it was hot and stuffy in the valley; so when, as we dawdled over our breakfast, they talked of a charming walk up the mountain side to a blue lake, with a little easy rock climbing at the end, I said I would go too. I ought to have insisted on another lady being of the party; but I did not think of it till too late—till, in fact, I found myself starting, the only woman, in a party of eight large and heavy-booted mountaineering men—Jack, Mr. Robinson, and three enormous barristers (friends of his), and two guides.

"However, they were very kind to me, and the first part of the expedition was quite pleasant. We wound slowly up the side of the valley over grassy slopes, with an occasional rocky bit, where my alpenstock came into requisition, and we called frequent halts and lay on our backs in the grass and watched the clouds, or looked down at the valley sinking further and further away—at the châlets dwindling till they looked like limpets on a rock, and the lakes shrinking to bits of blue film you could cover with your finger-tip, till we reached a grass plateau where we found a little cool blue lake resting in a hollow formed by the rocky sides of the mountain.

"It was a charming spot, and my delight in it would have been unmixed had it not been for a fierce-

looking rocky spike that shot away from the plateau up, up, till its needle-like point seemed to prick the blue sky, and overhung a terrific precipice that went sheer down to depths that one turned dizzy to think of, and which I now learned was the easy bit of rock climbing that they had spoken of. At the thought that any of the party contemplated so foolhardy a thing as the scaling of such an impossible-looking object I felt positively sick, and my heart began thumping in a way that I thought every one must hear. With an attempt to simulate indifference, I ventured to suggest that we should stay where we were, eat our lunch by the side of the lake, and wend our way home down the mountain side in the cool of the afternoon, as it was far too hot to exert ourselves climbing.

"It was then that it was suddenly borne in upon me that one of the guides—a tall black fellow with gleaming eyes and teeth—was a spider, and that I was going to play the part of the fly. As I spoke he shot a glance at me which penetrated straight through my simulated indifference to my bumping heart, and lifting his heavy limbs from the grass, he proceeded, with another sidelong glance at me, in which I detected suppressed fiendish glee, to undo a big coil of rope—his web as it might be—that he had brought with him. The whole party, following

his example, got up from their recumbent attitudes, and in less than no time Mr. Robinson's three friends and the two guides had tied themselves at intervals along the rope, and had set off towards the rock, single file, looking like a sort of animated kite's tail.

"Now if there was one thing calculated to turn my alarm to frenzied terror it was this proceeding. To climb the horrible thing by oneself would be bad enough; but to climb it tied tightly to four other people, so that where they went you would have to go, even if it happened to be headlong down the abyss, was simply appalling.

"Trembling with horror, I sat on the grass beside Mr. Robinson and Jack to watch the ascent. I have heard the agility of a good climber compared to that of a cat, and I believe that, as climbers go, the five whose performances we now witnessed were above the average. In my opinion they had not the agility of a cat's paw between them. Never have I witnessed anything so fascinatingly horrible as the way, tied together with string, they struggled up that rock. They sprawled, they slithered, they hung on, as it were, by their eyelids and their teeth, they flattened themselves out like spread-eagles and panted; while the grim, gaunt rock seemed to laugh up at the sky at having its back tickled. The cold perspiration

broke out on my forehead in great drops, as I watched their frantic struggles, and I clutched my alpenstock till it made great dents in my flesh, expecting every moment to see one of them swing out from the toppling rock and the whole string whirl down into the fathomless abyss below. The situation reached screaming-point when, collected in a little heap on the very point, all squeezed together and hugging each other tight, they proceeded to extricate their handkerchiefs and wave to us. I am thankful to say I did not scream, but I clutched Mr. Robinson's arm in a way calculated to turn it black and blue on the morrow. Not until they were slithering down again did my taut nerves relax enough for me to ejaculate in a fervour of relief, 'Nothing on earth shall induce *me* to go up that!'

"They reached the bottom in safety and untied themselves. 'Now we are going to watch *you*,' said one of them, coming towards us and flinging himself on the grass beside me. 'Oh, I am not going up,' I said, trying to speak carelessly and firmly at the same time; 'I have too much regard for my life.'

"There are times when one ceases to be a free agent. I saw the big black guide coming at me with a rope, and with a sardonic smile on his countenance, and I felt that my will-power had suddenly gone out,

and that I was a mere fly in has hands. 'Nein, nein ! nicht mich !' I cried, retreating backwards from him with a frantic effort to escape, and losing all command of the German tongue in my alarm.

"'Aber ! Aber !' he said with a deprecatory wave of his arm, and before I knew where I was I found myself firmly entangled in the web, and being dragged by sheer force into his 'parlour.' I cast a glance of wild appeal at Jack, but the wretch was busy tying himself to the rope and had apparently forgotten all about me. Mr. Robinson tried to say a few reassuring words, but he was promptly collared by the other guide, and in another moment there we were all tied together, another string of five, and I firmly hedged in between the two guides, with all hope of escape suddenly cut off.

"As for what followed, bewilderment and terror so swamped every other sensation that recollection is confused and misty. I was conscious of hanging on for bare life to a smooth slithery rock somewhere in mid-air—of a scorching blue sky overhead, and a vague green panorama consisting mainly of tops of trees, miles away below, and of a hot, delirious, dazed feeling all over me. To say I climbed that rock is ridiculous. I was simply hauled up, with my arms and legs flying like a windmill, and making frantic efforts *en route* to find anything in the shape of an

excrescence on the smooth rock to catch hold of. There was a brief respite in the whirl of emotions when we sat huddled together, all five of us, on the point (where there was barely room for one person) —I clinging desperately to any manly arm, leg, or neck that happened to be within reach. Then I felt myself seized by the shoulders, held firmly over the edge of the precipice, that I might see 'how far down it went,' and put back again. I was then let down as if I had been a fish at the end of a line.

"It was in this last proceeding that the guide excelled himself in fiendishness. He sat on the ledge above, dangling me, and giving me every now and then just enough of the rope to shoot a conviction through me that it had broken, and that unless I could hang on somehow, in another moment I should be whirling head downwards to the bottom of the precipice. I lay flatly trying to hug the smooth rock, while my leg groped vaguely about for some rest for the sole of its foot—till I slipped, and wildly reviewed my past, thinking I was being launched into eternity. A little comforting bump round my waist would assure me that I was still attached to the rope. Then the leg had to begin vaguely waving again. Occasionally the guide below, impatient of its idiotic gropings, would seize it and pull it down to a ledge anatomically beyond its reach.



"I reached the bottom a battered, bewildered, semi-maniac remnant of a woman—bruised, shaken, dazed, and quivering in every limb—too much crushed to do anything but wend my way home speechless.

"And every one of them (with the exception of the guide) thought I had enjoyed it!

"What extraordinary things men are!"



XIX

THE DISCONTENTED SEX

JACK's attitude towards the Woman Question is such as one would expect from the Average Man. He tells me, however, that it was on one occasion almost revolutionized by a little scene between a cock and hen, that he witnessed at a country railway station.

"Have you ever known a man who wished he was a woman?" Eugenia had asked him. "No, my dear," he had answered, "and, if I did, I should kick him." "You are very rude," she said. He protested that it was a natural sentiment, and one that would be shared by all right-thinking men. Eugenia said, "That only makes it worse;" and added musingly, "And yet, a great many women wish they were men." Jack said that surprised him, as he had always thought it must be most delightful to be a woman—for a woman; though of course no

man would wish to be one. There was a pause, and then she began again. "And yet you pretend to admire women so much!" "I don't pretend," he retorted, "I do." "But how can you, if you would kick a man who wished he was a woman?" Jack began to explain. But though it seemed so obvious to him he got rather muddled, and she rather cross. Finally she said, "Well, you need not be so pleased with yourself for being a man. It was not your doing. In fact, it was the merest accident that you were not born a woman!" and left the room, sparing him the necessity of a repartee.

His assertions Jack could not but admit had an appearance of inconsistency, but they were nevertheless true. It was true that he admired and adored women—not only individually, but as a class. But it was no less true that he would have a strong inclination to kick any man who said he would like to be one. He gave up trying to make them agree, and fell to imagining what it would be like to be a woman.

Was it true, as Eugenia said, that it was the merest accident that he had not been born one? Had it been such a narrow escape as all that?

He mused so long that he fell asleep and dreamed a dream. He dreamt he was in the nursery with his three brothers, and had just discovered that he was

a girl. All the others had been born boys, but he had petticoats and long hair down his back, and was undoubtedly a girl. He turned to one of his brothers and begged him to be a girl to keep him company. But he shook him off roughly, with a scornful "I should think not, indeed."

Then his brothers went to school, and he begged to be allowed to go with them. But, instead, he was seized and shut up in a dark room that looked like a prison, while a scarecrow of a woman, with corkscrew curls and spectacles, sat at the head of the table and asked him geographical riddles that he couldn't answer. All the while he burned with a sense of the gross injustice that had been done in making him a girl while all his brothers were boys. "It's bad enough to be born at all, without being asked whether we wish it or not," he said to himself, "but to be born a woman is adding insult to injury." But day after day in his dream girls went on being born in hundreds and thousands, without being asked, till there seemed to be great crowds of them, all crying because they were girls. And horrid boys stood in rows pointing fingers of scorn at them, and saying, "Cry, baby, cry."

Then they all seemed to grow up. And men were always writing books to say how very inferior women were, and how glad they were that they

themselves were men. They said that women had no brains and no spines—only stomachs. And that they always shrieked hysterically, and worse than all, that they had tails—only you could not see them. When they said that Jack felt he could stand it no longer. He got up on a platform somewhere, and began to address crowded meetings. "What is the good," he cried, "of telling us we are inferior? Do you suppose we like it any the better for having it continually dinned into our ears? Is not our inferiority just what we complain of?"

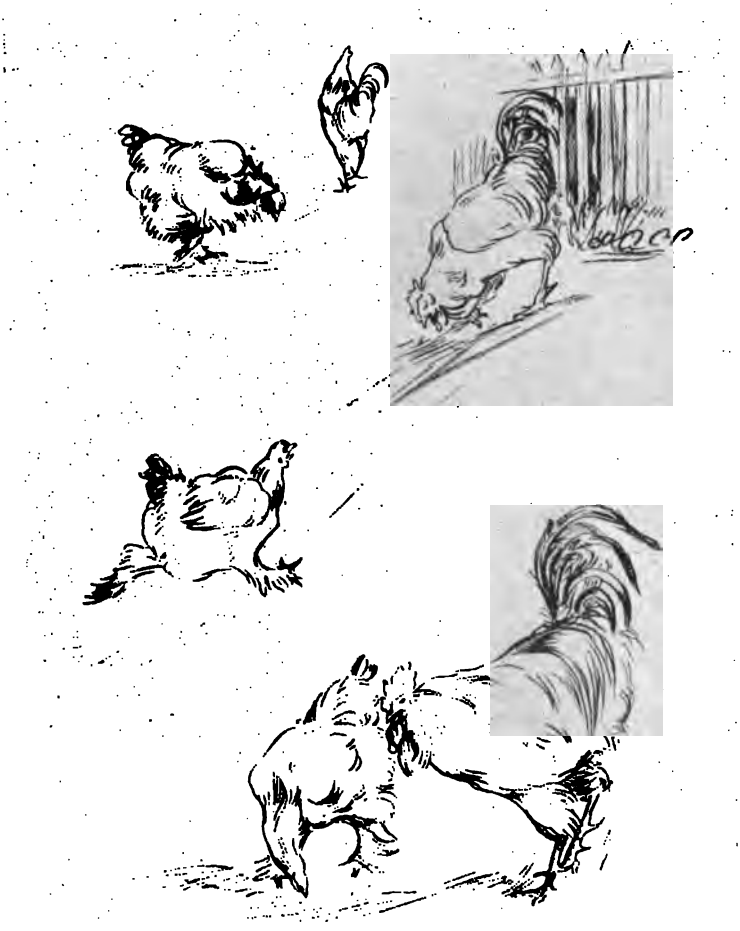
Suddenly a brilliant idea struck him. Why should they not all be men if they liked? A pair of knickerbockers and a bicycle, and there you were! He wondered no one had ever thought of it before. Soon the place seemed to be full of knickerbockers and bicycles, and they were all getting into them and on to them as quickly as they could, and tearing wildly about. The men and boys stood looking on. At first they seemed somewhat disconcerted; and then some of them began to laugh. Jack wondered what they were laughing at. Gradually they laughed louder and louder. He began to have an uneasy sort of feeling that something was wrong—that somehow they were not quite men after all.

He awoke, but hardly dared open his eyes, lest he should find that his dream was true. The sight of a

trousered leg and boot stretched into the fender somewhat reassured him. He put up his hand and felt his chin. Yes, there was his beard.

He re-lit his pipe and sat musing on what a very unpleasant dream it had been. Eugenia's remark, that many women wished they had been born men no longer surprised him. It seemed perfectly natural that they should. There was something radically wrong with his attitude towards the inferior sex. The problem how to reform it bothered him a great deal; and in order the better to solve it he went into the country the following afternoon to play golf.

While waiting for a train at a little railway station, his attention was attracted by a cock and a hen on the opposite platform. Jack watched them, idly at first, and then with attention. The hen was walking up and down in a leisurely manner, gazing idly about, and occasionally giving a little peck at the ground if she saw anything worth eating. The cock, on the other hand, was stepping in a deliberate, careful sort of way, with bent head, minutely scrutinizing the ground, as if looking for something. Occasionally he scratched up a little earth, and carefully investigated the scratched spot with one eye, as if he were rather short-sighted. After one of these scratchings he found something. He immediately paused,



her was now explained. "I know how disappointing it must be to have been hatched a hen," the cock seemed to say; "and far be it from me to glory in having been hatched a cock. Rather let me do all I can to make up for the cruel advantage I have stolen."

Jack hastened home, full of new resolutions. He greeted Eugenia with unwonted tenderness. She looked a little surprised, but he was not daunted. He loaded her with attentions, and tried to clothe his manners toward her in a garb of apologetic tenderness. The evening meal hardly seemed to offer scope enough for his attentions. He cast round in his mind for some tangible proof of his remorse and devotion. He remembered that lately many women had been bitten with a fancy for knickerbockers and bicycles—and thought with shame, that instead of hastening to gratify the innocent whim his brutal sex had scoffed and jeered at it. How different, he thought, would have been the behaviour of that gallant bird. How he would have hastened to lay all his little knickerbockers and bicycles (if he happened to have any) at the feet of the hen, if she had but breathed the slightest wish for them. When Eugenia got up to leave the table he put his arm round her in an impulse of emotional remorse, and said, "Dearest, would you like a little pair of knickerbockers and a bicycle?" She pushed him away from her, and said, "What *is*

the matter with you to-night? Is it a joke? Because, if so, I am tired of it." "It is not a joke," said Jack, "only that I am so sorry for you." "Why?" she asked, wonderingly. "Because you were born a woman instead of a man."

"Because I was born a woman?" she reiterated. "Do you suppose for a moment that I would rather have been a man? Not for ten thousand pounds a year!" And she went off into peals of laughter.

As for Jack, he went to his smoking den, simply staggered by this new proof of the hopeless inconsistency of woman.

XX

A WATER-WAGTAIL

THE place where the pond had been, presented a dreary spectacle. The last time we had seen it, it had been a fair-sized sheet of water, wide and deep enough for Betty, the tailless sheep-dog, to enjoy a good swim. Indeed, it used to go by the name of Betty's pond, since she absolutely refused to pass the track that led to it. She would sit down in the sand, and look at us with a mixture of defiance and coaxing.

"It is no use your going on," her eyes said plainly. "You will only have to come back again, for I must have my swim." As a rule we yielded. For Betty was a spoiled dog, and generally got her own way. If, however, we refused to give in, and continued our way in spite of her wishes, she would wait till we were nearly out of sight. Then running along the heather track, she would plunge into the pond, dis-

port herself for a second or two, dash out, and whirling along the road after us, shake herself aggressively all over us, giving us plainly to understand that she thought us perfectly odious not to have waited.

But that was a year ago. And during the winter the country had suffered from want of rain, and the pond had gradually dried away, leaving nothing but a muddy hollow—an undulating grey mud basin, with a few pools of dirty water at the bottom. We had been so accustomed to pausing by its side for Betty to take her bath, that we sank naturally down in the heather, though there was nothing but a mere empty depression to look at.

It was difficult to believe that it was the same spot, so great was the difference between last year and this. Then, the water, lying a shining film in the midst of heather and gorse, had been a refreshing thing to rest one's eyes upon. It was like the clear, liquid eye of the landscape, expressing the wild, invigorating spirit of the moor. But now——!

The setting, it is true, was as fair as ever. The sky overhead was pure, clear blue. Little white clouds sailed gaily in it like boats. The air, high up, was transparent and sparkling. Near the ground it played over the gorse and heather in a fresh, invigorating breeze. In the distance the slopes

retreated in the blue haze of early summer, and close around us clustered gorse, heather, and vigorous turf, from which, one after the other, larks shot up into the summer sky.

But instead of water, our eyes rested on a squalid patch of mud. Yes. In the midst of beauty, the spot breathed squalor. A yellow, sandy hollow would have had nothing to offend—would, indeed, have been in keeping with the rest. But this was of smooth, soft, unmitigated mud, such as one sees beneath the Thames bridges at low water, and instinctively shrinks from. The water had sunk gradually, for the hollow was a series of mud terraces. The bottom consisted of minor hollows, each containing a little dirty water, and connected by grey mud ridges and banks.

In the middle was a mud island, and sunk in it was a rusty tin, suggestive of tinned salmon. Not far off an aggressive-looking stick stuck out of one of the pools, and pointed slanting at the sky, dry, weedy mud dripping from its end. A portion of a broken earthenware flower-pot protruded from another mud-bank. Desolation and squalor seemed to have made a fixed abode of the spot. That a bright, sunny little pond could have contained so much foulness beneath its innocent-looking surface, and betrayed it not, gave one food for reflection.

As I looked and reflected, a water-wagtail alighted on the opposite bank, near a tuft of heather. He stood a few moments on the sand, between the heather and a small cushion of rush-like turf, and surveyed the muddy waste, as if he were wondering what had become of the water. Then he began pecking about in the sand. His tail wagged up and down cheerfully, and I felt that he was less oppressed by the general stagnation of the spot than I. As I watched him pecking and wagging about I instinctively adapted myself to his horizon. The tuft of heather became a forest shrub, the cushion of coarse grass a hillock of tall rushes, and the muddy hollow a vast waste, with sloping cliffs and stretches of sea pools and sand-banks.

After investigating the sand and the hillock of rushes, he looked meditatively across the undulating mud, and then hopped lightly down the bank to one of the terraces. Here he made some excavations in the cliff, and then made a further descent to what might be considered the bottom of the basin, where the muddy undulations sloped gradually towards a series of pools and sand-banks. He spent some minutes walking about on the wet, shining mud.

He was so near me that I could admire his soft black and white plumage, his bright, intelligent eye, and slender legs. There was a graceful daintiness

in the way he walked about, which banished all thoughts of squalor. It was no longer mud on which he walked, but shining sand. Wagging and investigating, he went on till he came to one of the pools of muddy water, and walked in, the water well covering his ankles. He was no longer a wagtail, but some sort of sea bird or gull. The miniature pool in which he stood shone like the sea at even; I could almost see a blue glimmer on it.

Still wagging, he walked on right through the pool, the water reaching half-way up his legs in the deepest part, till he reached the opposite sand-bank, where he rested awhile and contemplated the surroundings with, I could not but feel, admiration.

A couple of pools off lay the rusty tin embedded in sand, and further to one side was the projecting spar. With a swift and delightfully light motion he flew from the sand-bank and alighted on the edge of the rusty tin. I could imagine it some picturesque remnant of a stranded ship, left by the retreating tide. As if to amuse himself, he flew to the projecting spar, walked along to the end, examined the dripping weed, and back again to the rusty tin.

Then he hopped down again to another part of the hollow. Here various objects appeared that I had not noticed before. A smooth round rock lay embedded on one of the islands. It had a greenish

tinge, as if a retreating sea had decked it in seaweed. He stood on it for a moment, and looked more like a seagull than ever. Near it a miniature tree with delicate branches lay, like a felled and leafless oak, on its side.

At this side of the hollow the slope was so gradual that the surrounding landscape was almost on a level with it. I followed the wagtail, and found myself in a picturesque track of sand dunes and rushes, leading gradually to the level of heather and gorse.

I wandered with him about the sand dunes for some five minutes, up and down the hillocks of soft sand, and in and out among the tufts of grass and rushes. Once he disappeared behind a shrub of heather, and I thought he had gone off through the gorse and heather jungle, for I did not see him for a few seconds. I was reassured, however, by a glimpse of his wagging tail. And soon he appeared again between two tufts, and with a little rapid flight perched again on the rusty sunken tin at the bottom. Here he stood and looked about him again, with cheerful contemplation in his eye.

"What a charming spot this is!" I could almost hear him say. "Blue sky overhead, beautiful yellow and purple country all around; this delightful hollow full of sand-banks and shining pools, and this picturesque old ruin to give it a touch of romance!"



A dog came barking through the heather in pursuit of a rabbit. The water-wagtail started, and then off he flew. I watched him till he disappeared, a tiny speck, over a distant gorse bush. Then I looked at the empty pond.

It was a squalid, muddy hole after all! The pools at the bottom were filled with filthy water, from which the most persuasive sun could hardly extract a gleam. The sand dunes were merely a water track caused by the rain. The green rock was a dirty pebble some urchin had flung at a frog. As for the picturesque ruin——! How disgusting of people to throw their old salmon tins about! I thought.



XXI

WHISHTON

WHISHTON is known to natural history as a Mexican marmot. In appearance he is something between a small "bunnie" and a hedgehog. I first met him when paying an afternoon call. That Whishton's acquaintance should have sprung from anything so unpromising as an afternoon call, I have always looked upon as a proof that every phase of life has its possibilities.

Whishton's mistress is a genuine lover of animals. Instead of following the beaten track, and limiting her affection and interest to horses, dogs, cats and birds, she had gone off into the byeways, woods and hedges, and made friends with animals to be found outside the margin of civilization, or hovering on its border. To this latter class belongs the small four-legged bundle of fur, with character, personality, and individuality of its own, called Whishton.

When I first saw Whishton he was lying flattened out, like a very small fur rug with the head and legs and tail left on, right under the grate, in one of those old-fashioned fire-places with hobs.

"He *will* lie under the grate," said his mistress, routing him out to make him show himself. "And I know a cinder will drop on him some day and burn him. But he is dreadfully obstinate, and as soon as I take him out he goes back again."

Indeed, tenacity of purpose seemed to be the keynote of Whishton's character. No sooner was he forcibly removed than he went back and passionately flattened himself out again beneath the glowing embers. "I *will* be warm," he seemed to say, "wild horses shall not tear me from this pleasant spot." It was not till he had been dragged out half-a-dozen times that he gave it up, thinking no doubt that even warmth was dear at the price of such persistent disturbing.

Like most animals, Whishton appears to have a supreme contempt for civilization. "Bother these chairs and tables and carpets and doors!" one can almost hear him say, as he walks crossly about on the floor. "Why can't people live happily in the woods, where they can do as they like, go to bed when they like, get up when they like, and eat what and when they like; instead of in a stupid, stuffy

house, where you can't go anywhere without waiting to have a door opened, and where you can't even dig a hole without having your ears boxed?"

On one occasion civilization apparently got on his nerves, and he made up his mind he could stand it no longer. He made his way up to one of the top rooms in the house where lay a roll of carpet. Into this he crept and made up his mind to stay, "far from the madding crowd." He might have remained concealed there for the rest of the winter, if it had not been for one of his little peculiarities. He always answers to his name. It is as if the mere sound "Whishton" presses a button which forces a similar cry from him. No matter in how remote a corner he has hidden himself, to call his name never fails to make an echo. So when it was discovered that the queer little creature was missing, he was called all over the house. "Whishton-Whish!" sounded from room to room, and much as he may have desired to keep his place of hiding a secret, he was forced to echo the cry.

A faint, muffled, half-plaintive cry was heard from somewhere at the top of the house. It was traced to the empty room, and once there, to the roll of carpet, in the midst of which lay Whishton warm and snug.

"Let me alone! Don't bother me!" the cry

entreated. But, like other victims of domesticity, Whishton had to adapt himself to circumstances—not of his own choosing. The roll of carpet might from his point of view be most desirable as a place of residence, but from the point of view of his mistress it was undesirable in the extreme. He was promptly evicted and sent down-stairs. "One can't do a single thing!" he said petulantly as he walked down-stairs again.

Needless to say, he did not abandon his project because of a single rebuff. His mistress tells me that she believes he never will abandon the project of making his abode inside that roll of carpet. "Indeed," she said, "since we took to shutting the garret door, it has become Whishton's life-work to gnaw a hole under it and so effect an entrance. His whole soul is possessed with this desire. He thinks of nothing else all day, and as soon as an opportunity is given him by the opening of a door he makes straight for the staircase, scuttles up it, and proceeds with his gnawing."

Though Whishton's state of mind is one of placid boredom, whittled, as it were, to a point by intense concentration of purpose, I have on two occasions seen him lose his temper and give way to uncontrolled rage. The one occasion was when he was frustrated in his desire to go to this same roll of

carpet. He had sat patiently at the door, waiting for it to be opened, while I talked to his mistress. Then when I got up to go, "Watch Whishton!" she said. "He is going to his roll of carpet."

No sooner was the door open than he tore down the stairs so fast that we could hardly keep him in sight, his little stand-up tail and baggy legs giving him a very quaint appearance from behind. We followed as quickly as we could, and were just in time to see him reach the bottom of the staircase and scuttle across a passage to another closed door, and wait with his nose on the ground for us to open it. Quick as lightning, when it was opened, Whishton scuttled along another passage, and we were only just in time again to see him (like the white rabbit in *Alice in Wonderland*) disappear up another staircase.

"Whishton!" called his mistress after him, and an excited answer came from the staircase up which he was tearing might and main, "I can't wait!" to be repeated louder and louder and with more intensity and passion each time he was called—"I can't and *won't* wait!!" When he reached the top he was silent, though we continued to call. He had found the door of his garret shut. If he was caught he would be brought down and put into the detestable box of straw that domesticity had assigned

to him for a bed. His only safety lay in lying low. So he lay low.

But Fate was relentless. His mistress followed him up the staircase. I stayed below. The landing at the top of the staircase was pitch dark, and I could hear her feeling about in the corners for him. "Whishton! Where are you?" But answer came there none.

Suddenly "Here he is!" was followed by a scuffle and scream from the struggling Whishton; and the next minute Whishton himself, baffled and sulky, came walking slowly down the stairs. He had sense enough to see that he had lost, and there was nothing for it but to give in. Sulkily he walked along the passage at the bottom of the garret stairs, turned sulkily in at a door that opened into it, got crossly into a box that stood on the floor, and subsided with a queer little petulant gesture into the straw. His mistress followed to tuck him up and comfort him. "Don't be cross, Whishton," she said, as if she were talking to a naughty child; "I really cannot let you sleep in that roll of carpet." But he was in no mood to be comforted. With a cry of rage he flew at the comforting hand, bit, scratched, kicked, and exhibited all the signs of an ungovernable fit of temper.

On the second occasion there was, I think, more

excuse for his showing temper. He was sent in a cage to a cat and rabbit show. Apparently he had not thought that life had anything so hideous in store for him as to find himself shut up in a small cage in a huge place full of other caged animals that were filling the air with a pandemonium of sounds, being glared at by strange human beings, who pushed their horrid fingers through the bars of his cage and tried to touch him. Suddenly his mistress appeared in the crowd, opened his cage door, and took him out. He clung passionately to her. "Take me away from this horrible place," he cried, "or I shall go mad!" He felt himself stroked and comforted for a moment or two, and then!—he was put back into the cage and the door shut! It was more than he could bear. He lost his self-control. He seized the bars of the cage, shook them, shrieked, and bit anything he could reach; gave way, in short, to an uncontrollable fit of rage. If Whishton could write his autobiography, what he endured at that show would, I am sure, fill many pages. If his hair had not been grey already, doubtless his mistress would have found that it had turned when she went to take him home in the evening when the show was over.

One picture I carry in my mind of Whishton, as I saw him once when I was calling on his mistress.



He was sitting up on his tail looking wistfully out of the window at the trees and the garden. He sat there for about half-an-hour without moving; and I could not help feeling that he was feverishly making plans to escape from domesticity and be a little wild marmot once again.

XXII

IN A HAMMOCK

WHEN I found the hammock slung in its usual place under the weeping willow, it came upon me quite as a pleasant surprise. Since the day last October when, shrunk with autumn rains and choked with autumn leaves, it had been taken down and hung away out of sight in a corner of the tool-house for the winter, I had quite forgotten its existence. And now, here it was again, the same old hammock, refreshed and renewed by its winter sleep, and with suggestions of midsummer afternoons in every string.

The weeping willow is one of the patriarchs of the garden. Its great twisted branches make one wish one's childhood back again, that one might climb about among them and play at "house." They are as broad as roads, and in the great forks and hollows there is room for a dozen tree-houses. The weeping branches fall so thickly to the ground that they make a green tent—a pleasant shelter from the sun.

When I drew aside a fold of the green curtain and looked into the cool shade, with just enough of sunshine filtering through the leaves, and saw the hammock slung in lazy invitation from bough to bough, I felt as if I had suddenly found what I had been seeking all day. It was very hot. I had been wandering in the sun-baked garden snipping roses and sweet-peas. Here were cool shade and a couch. I would spend the rest of the day in idle enjoyment.

I arranged the cushions to my mind, got in, put up a Japanese umbrella over my head to ward off a shaft of sunlight that came in at the top, and sighed a sigh of deep content. I had no book with me—nothing to disturb my peaceful laziness. I lay and looked up into the transparent green full of quivering light overhead, at the wonderful maze of grey branches, and out through the gaps in the green curtain on to the sun-baked lawn, where insects hummed and danced.

There are times when even a dog is a bore, especially if his mood is not in harmony with your own. When Tom Tug and Abel appeared at one of the gaps in the leafy curtain, gazing at me with pricked ears and surprise in their eyes, I was distinctly bored; for I felt that a peaceful afternoon was not to be mine without a struggle. Not having seen a person in a hammock before, their surprise was great.

With their paws planted firmly on the ground they thrust their noses as far forward as possible that they might get a whiff of the phenomenon without coming too perilously near, and gave vent, Abel to a sharp little bark, Tom Tug to a guttural growl.

I said, "Don't be silly, dogs!" Whereupon they made a spasmodic bound towards me, stopped, while Tom Tug gave a jerky wag of his tail, and the tailless schipperke a hysterical waggle of his whole body, and then barked again. They approached thus with spasmodic bounds, starts, and barks, till they were near enough to touch the hammock with their noses. As soon as there was no longer room for doubt, their excitement broke loose.

"What are you doing? How did you get there? How are you stuck on?" their excited noses and gestures asked. And then, "Can't we make cocoons of ourselves, too?" and in an instant they had bounded into the hammock, to be as swiftly ejected on to the grass again. For a second or two we played a romping game, which consisted of both dogs jumping into the hammock, and being upset on to the grass again. Judging by the energy with which they played it, they would have liked to keep it up for hours. But two rounds were enough for me. At the end of the second I shut the Japanese



umbrella, banged them with it as hard as I could, and begged them to be good.

This caused a slight diversion. For a moment they stood and panted after their exertions. Then I distinctly saw Tom Tug make a sign to the schipperke. In another moment they were both up the willow tree, scrambling from one branch to another in an unsteady slithering manner, till they reached one that ran just above the hammock. Along this they proceeded to walk in spite of my cries to them to desist. Acrobatic feats always paralyze me with terror. I shielded my eyes from their faltering scrambling with the Japanese umbrella, and issued peremptory commands from behind it. "Get down this *minute*, dogs!" "Tom, if you *dare* to jump!" For in one of my rapid glances from under the umbrella I caught sight of him drooping over me from the bough, as if about to spring into the hammock. Whether they thought the risk to their own necks and limbs too great, or the severity of my voice inspired them with awe, I do not know, but they paused, and giving up the attempt to jump into the hammock, turned round, and Tom first and Abel following, partly walked and partly slithered down the branches till they reached the ground again.

When in doubt (what to do next) play "swallow-my-head" is an almost universal rule with dogs.

"Swallow-my-head" is a simple game for two dogs. The object is to try and swallow each other's head. So great is the fascination of the game that dogs will play it for hours on end—until, in fact, they are called upon to stop by distracted human beings who can stand it no longer. For it seems to add to the interest and fascination of the game to play it in close proximity to a person.

The ideal place for it is underneath a chair, in which some one happens to be sitting. The hammock, with me in it, lay sufficiently near the ground to suggest a chair with a person in it. Tom Tug and Abel at once engaged in a fierce game of "swallow-my-head." Abel gave the invitation by lying down and thrusting his little black head underneath the hammock, and showing two snarling rows of white teeth. The bull-dog at once responded. Lying down on the opposite side he thrust his great, clumsy, loose-cheeked head underneath and began making growling snaps at the schipperke. If so minded he could probably snap off the schipperke's head at a bite. But he contented himself with nibbling at him in the gentlest manner possible, and making feints rather than real snaps. The schipperke, who has no sense whatever of the difference in size between himself and Tom, made frantic efforts to encompass Tom's great head with his own small jaws, and when



he failed, vented his annoyance by worrying his superfluous cheek, snapping at his nose and biting his ears. Every now and then, presumably when one had gained a point, Abel darted off, and Tom Tug gave chase. Round and round the lawn they went full speed, in and out of the shrubberies, dodging backwards and forwards, and every now and then standing, panting on opposite sides of a bed, waiting for one to make a move, till the schipperke gained the shelter of the hammock, and the chawing and snapping began anew.

It is a game I have frequently found irritating; but this afternoon I found it simply maddening. I had just made up my mind to take the strong measure of getting out of the hammock and tying both the dogs up, when a swallow who was sweeping round and round the lawn in the sun brushed the weeping willow curtain as he passed, and uttered a little cry of challenge—

"Come out of that, you dogs, and catch *me* if you can!" and off he swept, round and round, close to the ground. In an instant the dogs were out after him, and I lay at peace and watched the chase through the gap in the weeping willow. I had often watched them before. For the swallow is an old friend of the dogs, and frequently "drops in" for a quiet game of chase on the lawn. But this afternoon it almost seemed as if he was bent on taking it out of them for

their treatment of me, such a teasing, chaffing spirit did he put into his flight, brushing them in the face, and snapping his beak at them, till the schipperke positively squeaked with rage and alarm. The assurance of safety with which he swooped past them, so low on the ground that one could see his beautiful steel-blue back shining in the sun, was charming, and the easy swing with which, after a round or two in which he seemed to float rather than fly, enjoying the sensation of being chased, he shot up over the trees to take a wider sweep through the air was delightful to watch. Half-an-hour of a hopelessly ineffectual chase quite took the conceit out of the dogs. They lay exhausted and panting on the grass—too tired to do more than follow the pretty creature's rapid movements with their eyes.

As for me, I lay in the hammock, and watched the chase, deeply grateful to the swallow for taking away my tormentors, and leaving me to the enjoyment of my tent in peace.



XXIII

THE DUCKS IN THE RIVER

Down the river the ducks paddle and dive all day long. The river flows smooth and full and lazy. There are no sly currents nor treacherous eddies, nothing to disturb its calm security. The ducks are as safe as in the ornamental lake in the Botanical Gardens.

They are not, however, out of the world, like the ducks of the ornamental water. For calm and secure as the river flows, it is none the less a public highway. Cottages with poultry yards and wood-stacks make picturesque untidy patches here and there—patches full of life and movement, colour and noise. Children escape from them and play in the mud at the water's edge, and are on friendly terms with the ducks, occasionally throwing them scraps of things to eat. And women keep going in and out of the cottages shaking mats and scolding the children.

Along the river bank goes an intermittent procession of men and women, dogs and horses. And down the river itself goes a stream of traffic, interrupted often by long gaps, but never wholly broken. Not the noisy rattling traffic of the streets, but the smooth, noiseless gliding of things in deep water. It consists chiefly of black barges, lying deep in the water, heavy with stones and sand, and towed by stalwart horses. Though they go swiftly, it is surprising to see how little disturbance they make with their gliding. The river is as smooth after their passing as if they had barely skimmed the surface, instead of cutting a deep line in its waters. Now and then a little fussy tug comes puffing down and creates quite a commotion, working the river up into waves, which, however, subside as soon as it has passed. And rather more often rowing boats pass along, some gay with laughter and colour, and others with lazy loungers who let themselves slowly drift.

Where they all come from, the ducks know little and care less. The most venturesome duck has not gone far enough to find the limits of the river. From an unknown past, as far as they are concerned, the traffic glides in, and to an unknown future it passes on. They are content to loaf in the highway, to paddle and dive or perform their toilet, and watch life as it passes by.

Some of us have had the curiosity to follow the course of the river as it winds like a silver serpent through low-lying meadows fringed with reeds, and with now and then a town crowded on its banks, till reaching the coast it flows smoothly, noiselessly, and almost imperceptibly into the ocean. Though its course seems so level, here and there a lock shows a slight downward slope, and the smooth flow is interrupted by a fall of a foot or two over a weir.

Near one of these weirs, beneath a clump of Scotch firs clinging to the bank, lives a party of white ducks that attract my attention every time I pass. Whether it be their surroundings, or something special in the ducks themselves, or merely that the lock, with its water-worn woodwork, is a picturesque object near which it is pleasant to linger, I do not know; but whenever my walk leads me in their direction I feel constrained to stop and watch the ducks.

Standing at the river brink, I look straight down into the lock, and can watch it filling with turbid green water to make a passage for some travelling barge. Beyond the lock is the miniature Niagara of the weir. And not far from the weir, near the opposite bank, is the resort of the white ducks. Just beneath the clump of firs the river-bed rises and makes a little flat mud island. The dark green foliage growing in tufts at the top of the bare trunks

of the Scotch firs casts a shadow, and the water, which out in the middle and near me looks a pale, muddy, olive green, looks dark and clear in the shade. To one side of the island it seems to me there is a deep pool; but on the other side it is shallow, for the ducks can dive into the mud without standing on their heads.

This morning this spot on the river highway tempted one to linger longer than usual. Out in the middle of the river a tiny breeze broke the surface of the water into ripples, among which the sun flashed diamonds. Sunshine also sparkled in the white splashing water of the weir. The shade beneath the Scotch firs looked cool and dark. About a dozen ducks were reposing or disporting themselves on and near the mud island. Their plumage vied in whiteness with the splashing water of the weir out in the sun, and their legs and beaks made streaks of vivid orange. Some of them were displaying their legs and web feet as they stood on the mud island pluming themselves, diving in among the soft white feathers with their beaks, shaking and spreading their tails and wings, and altogether performing a thorough and satisfactory toilet. Others were sailing in the deep pool near the island, and making occasional dives with their beaks, leaving nothing to be seen but their white tails waggling, and glimpses of the orange

web feet paddling under water to keep the balance. Two, duck and drake (one recognized the little curled tail) were idly loafing and watching life on the river bank. They caught a sympathetic gleam in my eye, and with quick responsiveness sailed across the river towards me, eying me with inquisitive expectancy. When they were within a yard of the bank the lady proceeded to investigate the face of the waters, stretching her neck now this way, now that, as if she were looking for something. Having apparently satisfied themselves that the "something" was not there, they both turned round and sailed back to the Scotch firs again, and I realized that not friendliness but greed had been the motive of the visit. As they sailed back the duck cast a glance or two at me over her shoulder, to see, I suppose, if I understood the drift of the episode, and were likely to take the hint.

As I leant against the bar of the lock and watched them sailing and diving between sun and shade, I thought, as I have often thought before, Who would not be a water bird! What could be more delightful than to combine the power of flying in the air with that of diving and swimming in a river—to be able to exchange one for the other whenever the impulse moved?

Intercourse with water seems to have a softening effect on animal as well as human nature. Amphibi-

ous creatures (if we except, perhaps, crocodiles) are as a rule attractive. Many of us who feel inclined to shriek at the sight of a land rat, will watch a water rat swimming like a diminutive walrus by the river edge, with enjoyment and admiration. Few people can watch a soft-eyed seal in the water without an impulse of affection, and, utilitarian motives apart, ducks are probably more popular than hens. Certainly there is a serene amiability tinged with humour in the eye of a duck which we may look for in vain in the eye of a hen. A smiling sympathy gleams from them that seems to invite your friendship. There is something engaging in the inquisitive friendliness with which they regard you, and something almost touching in their responsiveness. There is nothing so mobile as a party of ducks in the river. You may move them about, as it were, with a breath. An active dog running backwards and forwards by the side of the river will pull a family of ducks after him as if he had them by a string.

Ducks are creatures of leisure. They appear to have plenty of time on their hands, and nothing to do with it—unlike hens, who are always busy and generally in a fuss. They are splendid loafers, but their inquisitiveness and interest in things in general prevent their being as dull as loafers sometimes are. They are said to be mischievous creatures. This is



probably partly owing to the fact that they are creatures of leisure, but also owing to an inherent love of folly and sense of humour. To see a duck waddle down the length of a row of peas and deliberately nip the head off each, pausing now and then to look up at you with a twinkle in his eye, is to realize this.

I have been told too, that they never quarrel, and that though they may tease each other and scramble for scraps, they are always on the jolliest of terms. A friend tells me a curious fact, that the drake has no voice. "I sometimes wonder," he adds, "whether he has just made a joke in his hoarse whisper, when all his ducks suddenly explode in a chorus of quacks, like applause or laughter."

Compared with the white ducks that fleck the green waters of the river, the ducks in the ornamental waters of the Botanical Gardens are gaudy aristocratic creatures. Life seems a more complicated affair, too, among these upper-crust fowl. Dandy drakes with peacock-green cravats lead about parties of little brown ducks, and as one watches them one feels that life in the ornamental water is, compared with life in the river, as full of complications and intrigues as is life in the complex whirl of modern society.



XXIV

BORED

I WAS bored. That was all that was the matter with me, but it was quite enough. It is true I had had influenza, but I had recovered. The doctor said I was quite well, but advised me to take it easy for a few days. For the first day I sat over the fire with a pile of novels specially recommended to those recovering from influenza, warranted not to addle the pulpiest brain. But I found it impossible to concentrate my mind on any of them. I read the beginnings of them all, glanced in a cursory manner at the middles, and then looked at the ends and found them all either deadly dull or quite preposterous. The next day I went out. Something seemed to have happened to the streets and houses since I had seen them last. They had grown ugly and dirty, and, above all, flat, dull, and uninteresting. As a rule, I love the busy, crowded,

bustling thoroughfares with the houses thronging on either side. Rows of tall, thin houses, where tragedies, comedies, and romances stand side by side, pressed close together in long thin stripes, and blocks of flats, where they lie in layers one on top of the other, like a Neapolitan ice, suggest all sorts of thrilling and interesting stories to my imagination. But to-day the stripes and layers had a tendency to get on my brain and drive me mad, like the man in Rudyard Kipling's story who went mad over the streaks in the sea.

The people looked plain and dull, not to say dirty and shabby. They all seemed to be in an unnecessary hurry, and to be making an irritating amount of fuss and bustle about nothing. There were so many of them that you could hardly walk along without being jostled. When I paused for a second on the pavement about six people, unable to pull up in time, charged into me, and nearly landed me in the gutter. I could not stand this. So I went home and moped over the fire for three days on end.

At the end of the third day I said, "This must be dealt with firmly." So I made a supreme effort and went with a friend to an evening party. As I made my way up the crowded staircase I had great difficulty in resisting an impulse to sit down on a step and let every one walk over me. But I did resist it, and got

safely to the top, where I was shaken hands with by the hostess, and handed into a hot room crowded with people all talking at once at the tops of their voices. For a few minutes I felt as if I was suffering from some bewildering form of nightmare, in which people I did not wish to see were continually bearing down upon me from remote corners of the room—shaking me fiercely by the hand and bellowing at me things I could not hear, or hearing could not understand. After a quarter of an hour of this I felt I must scream or go mad. I made a sign to my friend, said, "I can stand this no longer," and escaped.

The next day Mr. Brown came to see me. He meant it kindly, no doubt. But the best intentions are an insufficient excuse for such an infliction as that visit from Mr. Brown. People had frequently said to me, "What an awful bore Mr. Brown is!" But I had never realized it as I did on this occasion. He is one of those men who try to make conversation out of nothing—like a woman. One can stand a woman who makes conversation out of nothing. It is her business. She knows how to do it, and generally contrives to be amusing. But when a man poses as an inconsequent chatterbox he merely achieves being an exasperating bore. At least Mr. Brown does. He began by telling me stories one after the other. I did not listen, but I knew when he had

come to the point by a maddening sort of cackle he made, and I tried to force a sickly smile. When he had exhausted all his stories he began a sort of running comment on things in general, beginning always with "Has it ever struck you how very curious it is that," and so on. It is a cheap style of conversation very popular with bores. The point about it is that you can apply it to anything, and go on, like the brook, for ever.

Mr. Brown kept it up for about an hour. Then he took to asking questions as to how I felt, and then I felt that endurance had reached its limits. I jumped up suddenly, and saying, "*Do* excuse me, Mr. Brown, I have forgotten an important engagement, I ought to have been there an hour ago!" fled from the room and out into the street, leaving Mr. Brown poised expectant on a note of interrogation. I did not know where I was going, I did not care. I only knew I was fleeing from Mr. Brown. I hailed a passing hansom and leapt into it.

When the cabman put his head through the hole in the top a sudden impulse made me say, "To the Zoo." As soon as I got inside the gates I felt it was the right place, the only place, in fact, that I could stand in my present state. There were hardly any people there, only animals. Animals are very soothing to the nerves. They offer one a silent sympathy

that is very consoling, and they ask no questions. So you tell them everything and it relieves you. There are animals to suit one's every mood at the Zoo—animals of every shape, size, colour, and character. I passed by a party of waggish-looking ducks who winked at me; paused for a moment before an old eagle in a cave, who sat on a perch with his shoulders hunched up, the very picture of boredom, and went on to the insect house.

There I met an "insect."

I do not know what he was called, but he was bright green in colour, and something between a frog and a lizard in shape. He occupied a little glass case with a diminutive tree in it. What first attracted my attention was his remarkable eye. It was a sort of telescope on a pivot. He was standing with his back to me as I approached, and he suddenly gave his eye a sort of swing back and fixed me with it. It said, as plainly as an eye can, "I know what's the matter with you. You're bored. So am I." I at once conceived a violent liking for him—and standing by his glass case watched him for about half-an-hour. After his first remark he took no further notice of me, but I could see quite well he knew I was there. His whole attitude expressed excessive *ennui*. Occasionally he yawned, but he was obviously too much

bored to do anything else. For several minutes he was absolutely motionless, and might have been made of stone. Then something — perhaps it was my sympathy—moved him to express the intolerable loathing he felt for the monotony of his existence. His little glass house contained, as I said, a diminutive tree, on the topmost twig of which sat another "insect," his exact counterpart—only much smaller. He had his back to us, and appeared to be asleep. My friend began slowly walking towards the tree. His gait was peculiar. He held his elbows very much turned out, and his telescope eye and the extreme deliberation with which he walked gave him the air of a small masher. By dint of taking about one step a minute he reached the bottom of the tree. There he paused for a long time and looked vaguely out in the opposite direction, till I was afraid he had forgotten his purpose. But he pulled himself together after a minute or two, and began laboriously to mount the tree—hand over hand, grasping the trunk firmly with his funny little splayed-out fingers and thumbs. As he neared the top I began to wonder if he was aware of the existence of the small one on the top, for he never appeared to look up. I was not long left in doubt. He got quite close up behind him on the twig, then raising his queer little hand in the air over him, brought it slowly down,

and grasping him firmly round the waist gave him one long, vicious, vindictive squeeze. That was all he did. But it apparently gave him great relief, for without waiting to see how his victim took it (the only visible effect was that he opened his mouth and emitted what looked like a very small scream) he turned and walked slowly down the tree again, and taking up his original position at the foot, continued to gaze into vacancy with the same world-weary, ineffable boredom expressed in every feature.

"If," I said to myself, as I walked home, "IF I could only have taken Mr. Brown between my finger and thumb, and squeezed him like that till there was none of him left!"



XXV

THE BLACK AND WHITE CAT

It is true that I have always disliked the black and white cat. She is an ugly creature. She has a black back and white legs. One half of her face is black and the other white, and she has a thin black tail of the very meanest description. I feel sure, too, that she belongs to the criminal class among cats. For she has a low, criminal type of countenance, and a thoroughly dishonest, cowardly expression in her eye. Altogether she is the sort of cat that gives you the "creeps," and as different from my little street Arab of a cat, Tom Jones, or the gentle fluffy-haired Tiger, as it is possible for a cat to be.

But though I have such a mean opinion of her, I am determined that the dogs shall not chase her. In the first place, chasing cats is a bad habit for dogs to indulge in. It is one to which dogs are addicted by nature; but unless waged war against, it may

lead to unpleasant relations with one's neighbours. In the second place, though she has the misfortune to be a cat of unprepossessing exterior and even low moral nature, I see no reason that she should be ill-treated for what is certainly not her fault. Consequently I do my best to protect her.

I must admit that my *rôle* of protector is a difficult one. It seems as if the impulse to chase the black and white cat were absolutely irresistible. I must credit the dogs with trying in response to my commands to resist the impulse. I have seen them, when they have caught sight of the enemy stalking through the shrubbery, stand stiff and quivering with emotion —obviously trying with all their might to obey my peremptory "*No*, dogs!" Then the stupid creature catches sight of them and darts away, and, casting all other considerations to the wind, off they go after her!

I am happy to say that they have never yet come within yards of catching her. For she runs like a hare, and has, moreover, one way of escape and two havens of refuge that are barred to the dogs. The way of escape is over the high brick wall that separates the garden from the road. When she takes this way the dogs realize at once that she has scored, as they are unable to follow her over the wall. I always know when she has gone over the wall, because

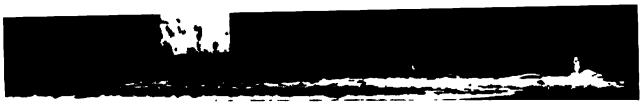
the dogs come back at once, making a great show of hurrying, and trying to pretend that they have only just heard my whistle, and came as soon as they possibly could. Of course I let them see that I am not deceived, by reprimanding them severely, and if there is a stick handy administering several strokes.

Their way of receiving correction is very characteristic. Tom Tug, the bull-dog, prostrates himself at my feet, puts his nose between his two front paws, and says, "I know I'm a villain. Beat me quick and have done with it." The schipperke seats himself on his haunches, puts his nose in the air and his ears well back, and says, "Please don't beat me. I should never have *thought* of chasing the cat if Tom had not suggested it."

The two havens of refuge are the fir tree and the wood-stack beneath the chestnuts. Sharp yelps from Abel, and a curious guttural sound that does duty for a bark from Tom Tug, warn me that she has sought safety in either the one or the other. If it is the fir tree, I find both the dogs mounting guard in defiant, excited attitudes at the foot of the tree, and looking up, see the black and white cat eying them with ineffable contempt and a Cheshire cat smile, from a lofty bough, so obviously master of the situation that I wonder if it is not labour lost my acting as her protector. If she has resorted to the



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wood-stack, I find the dogs in a state of exasperation bordering on insanity—leaping on to the top of the wood-stack and looking down among the logs; leaping down and looking up; and tearing round and round to see if there be not some way of getting inside. Peering into the stack, I see the cat seated right inside among the logs, calm security and indifference to dogs expressed so aggressively in her attitude that for a moment I cannot help sympathizing with their exasperation. All the force of will I possess is needed to get them away, and give the cat a chance of escape. I have known them when not interfered with, mount guard over the wood-stack with the cat inside for more than two hours, showing a perseverance worthy of the keenest sportsmen.

I often wonder they do not hate me for calling them off when engaged in an exciting cat hunt. But dogs have beautiful natures, and are incapable of bearing malice. I cannot acquit them, however, of practising a little mild deception—of pretending that they do not hear me. They keep this up until my voice becomes so peremptory that deception is no longer possible. Then they pretend suddenly to discover my presence. "Oh, are *you* here? We didn't see you!" they say, running up to me in a waggling, apologetic way. "Just wait a minute. We'll come in a second. We only want to see what this cat is



up to," and they rush back to the wood-stack. Not till my voice becomes passionate in its peremptoriness do they realize that good policy demands they should resist no longer. They must think my behaviour quite unreasonable. As they follow me reluctantly, casting longing glances back at the wood-stack, I feel that they are wondering that I do not see she is not the sort of cat any decent person would care to have about the premises.

Two dogs are much more troublesome than one. But they certainly have a better time. An only dog is, as a rule, like an only child—staid and well-behaved. Two together encourage one another in mischief and suggest adventures. I have seen Abel, when rather bored and looking about for something to do, suddenly begin to think about the cat. He has given Tom Tug a suggesting look which said plainly, "Let us go and look for that cat," and off they have gone round the garden to investigate her favourite haunts.

The suggesting look was even more marked when they took to going off to pay visits to the cottages, when they had a spare moment and thought no one was looking. They began by going out to breakfast, and it was some time before we found out where they went. Our suspicions were aroused by the fact that they were always late for breakfast and

by the somewhat affected effusiveness of their manners when they put in an appearance. William was the first to discover where they went. He thought they looked "as if they were up to something," he said; for they were standing together near the corner of the house looking about them as if they wanted to see if any one was looking. Seeing no one—for William was concealed behind a tree—they set off together at a quick trot, got through a hole in the hedge, trotted across the field, and got through another hedge into one of the cottage gardens. William followed them, and found them apparently quite at home in the cottage kitchen, being made much of and fed with tit-bits from the cottage breakfast-table.

It was a habit which I felt must be discouraged, for there was no knowing what it would lead to. I told William to watch them, call them back, and administer correction the next time they went. I had underrated the attractions of the cottage when I imagined that one such reprimand would be sufficient to deter them. Whether they suspected the cottage of harbouring the black and white cat, or whether they merely thought partaking of the cottage breakfast too pleasant a habit to be given up without a struggle, I do not know, but they certainly used all their arts and subterfuges to evade the command.

Whenever William or any one else was in sight they simulated intense interest in something which might be supposed from its position and nature to exclude all thought of the cottages. As soon as supervision was withdrawn, off they started. On one occasion William watched them from behind the hedge as they went. "Every few yards," he said, when describing it to me afterwards, "Tom kept looking back to see if any one was following, just like a Christian."

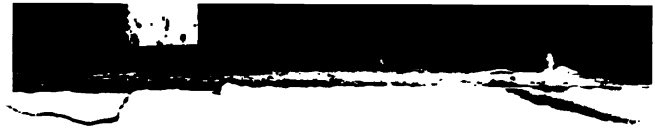
Repeated interceptions and corrections have persuaded them to give up going out to breakfast. But they still manage to evade observation and pay an occasional visit. Indeed, for several months past Tom has gone over to the cottages every Saturday afternoon, and come back with the shank-bone of a leg of mutton.

XXVI

MONSIEUR, MADAME, ET BÉBÉ

MAX loves thermometers. They appear to have some mysterious attraction for the human man that the feminine intellect is incapable of grasping. If all the thermometers in the world were swept into the sea to-morrow, I am quite certain I should fail to notice it. And I am equally convinced that the world deprived of all its thermometers would for Max assume a different hue.

I have often wondered wherein lay its charm. In itself it is an uninteresting, not to say ugly object. And the useful purpose it serves seems, to say the least, unnecessary. For practical purposes one's own sensations are quite sufficient guide as to how hot or how cold it is. I want no thermometer to tell me when it is cold enough to light a fire; and detest those people who when you sit shivering will tell you that you cannot possibly want a fire because the



thermometer is above sixty. The thermometer, forsooth! My good person (I feel inclined to say), the thermometer may not be cold, but *I* am, and as this house is arranged with a view to my comfort, quite regardless of the feelings of the thermometer, I shall have a fire.

Max has, I am happy to say, no tendency to regulate his life to suit the thermometer. His love for thermometers is a mere harmless craze. And as such I do not feel called upon to interfere with it. As a matter of fact, there are thermometers or barometers on nearly every wall in the house.

Not content with these, he keeps a little white house in the kitchen-garden, like a bee-hive on four very tall legs, which contains nothing but thermometers in various attitudes. Wet or fine, he pays this little house a visit every morning, lets down the front panel, puts his head inside, and communes with the contents for a few minutes, and takes a small book out of his pocket, and makes some, to me, utterly unintelligible entries in it.

It is my habit to accompany Max to the kitchen-garden; to wander round, investigate the vegetables, eat fruit, pick sweet-peas (according to the time of year), while he is engaged in the thermometer mysteries. And these somewhat superficial observations are the result of occasional glances flung in

his direction by way of seeing how he is getting on.

It is about two months since Max announced to me, while I was eating gooseberries, that two spiders had taken up their abode in the thermometer house. I shuddered, and said I hoped he did not want me to come and look at them. He proceeded (in spite of my telling him I would rather not hear anything about them) to inform me they had been there a month. At first there had been only one spider, but not long ago he had brought home a great fat wife. I shrieked and put my fingers in my ears. Next to being hairy, the most horrible thing a spider can be is fat.

In spite of my protests Max continued to talk about his spiders. Nearly every day he had some bit of information to impart as to their doings. They lived in the hinge of the front panel, and had grown quite flat to adapt themselves to their position. They slept all day and hunted moths all night. One day, on his giving me a solemn assurance that they were both asleep and would not move, he persuaded me to look at them. Keeping well behind him I looked cautiously round his arm, while he let down the front of the house. There they were, both of them on the hinge, with their legs tucked up and obviously asleep. One was

about the size of a sweet-pea seed, and the other about the size of an ordinary green pea, flattened out. And both were brown, with fancy spots. "Monsieur," said Max, pointing to the little one; "et Madame," pointing to the big one. "But Madame is about twice the size of Monsieur!" I cried. For such an irregularity could not be allowed to pass. "That is always the case with this sort of spider," said Max.

The thermometer house—screen, Max calls it—has a little grass plot all to itself. Just behind it grows a clump of Indian corn, the handsome green foliage standing about four feet high.

"Look here," said Max, shutting up the screen; and he drew my attention to the Indian corn. There, stretched from one spike to another of the plants, was a nicely-made spider's web, of the cart-wheel description. "If you come out at dark," he said, "you would find Monsieur sitting in the middle looking for moths." I told him I was quite willing to take his word for it.

Such was my position when Max asked me one morning at breakfast if I would keep his thermometer register while he was away. And any one who suffers as I do from a morbid horror of spiders will understand why I turned pale and did not answer. After a few moments' silence, "*I couldn't*,"

I murmured in a heartfelt voice. Max looked disappointed, and I was overwhelmed with remorse.

I spent five minutes wrestling in silence with myself. I thought of the dozens of spiders Max had caught and put out of the window at my request, and how the day before he had not even complained when I had called him away from his comfortable arm-chair and his pipe to catch one that was walking about on my dressing-table. And then I thought how ungrateful it was of me to refuse to do him such a small service, and how absurdly childish it was to be afraid of spiders. "Very well," I said, after a pause, and trying not to let my voice show the effort it cost, "I don't mind."

Max was delighted. We agreed that till he left I had better accompany him every morning to the thermometer screen, both to learn how to keep the register, and also to get used to the sight of Monsieur et Madame. They were not always in the same place when we opened the screen, but as a rule they were asleep. Once or twice, when Max gave Madame a push with his pencil to move her from what he considered a dangerous position, she fell through the crack and let herself down the leg of the house by a rope to the grass beneath. She kept hold of the rope, however, and pulled herself up. And even when we left her sitting in the

grass she was always inside the house the next morning.

Max was away for a week, and I took that thermometer register every day religiously. No one who does not share my feelings about spiders can have any idea what it cost me. I never opened the screen without expecting them both to spring out at me. If I did not see them at once, I stood paralyzed, scanning the inside of the little house with a frantic eye till I had found them. I kept half an eye on them the whole time I was making the entries, and hardly breathed till I had shut up the screen again.

On the sixth day after Max had gone, when I opened the thermometer screen I could find neither Monsieur nor Madame. Knowing their love of dark corners, with mixed feelings—half afraid to find them, yet full of anxiety lest I should not—I investigated each corner of the screen, but there was not a sign of them. I looked outside, examined each leg of the house, and the grass plot beneath. Then I went to the web in the Indian corn. It was torn and untidy, but there was no sign of its owners. They had disappeared, and left no trace. My imagination at once suggested what had happened. They had gone out to hunt as usual, and a bird had eaten them up. What *would* Max say! I stood

for some minutes motionless before the screen wondering what I had better do, and finally making up my mind I could do nothing but watch and wait, I closed the screen and walked away. All through that miserable day at intervals of half-an-hour I found myself wandering towards the thermometer screen, in the hopes of finding them in their usual place. And each time I was disappointed. In the evening I wrote to Max, "A dreadful thing has happened. Monsieur et Madame have disappeared. When I went to take the register this morning they were not there. And now at 7.30 they have not come back."

It is a fact that I was awake most of the night wondering what had become of those wretched spiders. Though as a rule I did not take the register till after breakfast, I was walking along the path towards the thermometer screen as early as seven the next morning. I opened it, almost trembling with apprehension, and the first thing I saw, with a throb of relief, was Monsieur, sitting in his usual place. I glanced eagerly round for Madame. There she was, just round the corner inside, and—I rubbed my eyes—near her, about an inch away, sat a tiny counterpart of them both, about the size of two pins' heads, but such an exact



copy in miniature markings and shape that one could have no doubt as to his parentage.

Max came back the next day. As soon as we had had lunch we went into the garden, and our steps turned towards the thermometer screen. I went on ahead and opened it. "Here they are," I said, when he reached me, and I pointed, "Monsieur, Madame—et Bébé!"



XXVII

A DOMESTIC TRAGEDY

If any one had told me six months ago that I should weep over the death of a spider I should have laughed them to scorn. But the, so to speak, human aspect of the little family in the screen had developed so rapidly since I had taken them under my charge that the untimely end of poor little Monsieur seemed nothing less than a tragedy. Let me tell the worst at once: he was accidentally squashed in the door of the thermometer screen.

The miserable day I had spent looking for Monsieur et Madame when they were lost, and the unexpected arrival of Bébé, seemed entirely to have swept away the "spidery" feelings with which I had formerly regarded them. They were, to me, not so much spiders as a family of very small individuals, whose doings and behaviour generally were matters of deep interest. I now visited the ther-

mometer screen two or three times a day, with feelings of pleasant anticipation rather than horror. Madame, I think, found my visits too frequent, and objected to having the full glare of daylight flashed in upon her domestic privacy so often. For one morning when I went with Max to pay the usual visit, she had disappeared. Monsieur and Bébé were seated side by side on the lintel, but Madame was nowhere to be seen. After a careful hunt in all the corners of the little white house, we discovered her underneath one of the thermometers that occupied a horizontal position on the floor of the screen. The little brass knobs at each end that served to attach the rings by which the thermometer could be suspended acted as supports which kept it just high enough above the floor for Madame to conceal herself with safety beneath it. After this gentle hint I made up my mind to limit my visits to two a day—one in the morning, when Max went to take the register ; and one in the afternoon, after tea, just to see how they were getting on.

From his size and general behaviour I surmised that Bébé was no infant-in-arms, but a sharp youngster who had already acquired some knowledge of the world. Where his father and mother had fetched him from that day I was not prepared to say, but hought it might possibly have been from school.

He was about a quarter of the size of his father, and absurdly like him in appearance. After the first day he was always to be found sitting near Monsieur, and I gathered that the latter was having an eye to his education. On one of my afternoon visits I found Bébé mounting guard in the web in the Indian corn, and surmised that he was having a lesson in hunting. For Monsieur was seated on one of the corn spikes not far off—I suppose to see how he got on. The serious business of life was, in fact, beginning for him. On another occasion I noticed near the large web an untidy, badly-made little affair, about half the size of the big one, which I took to be Bébé's first attempt.

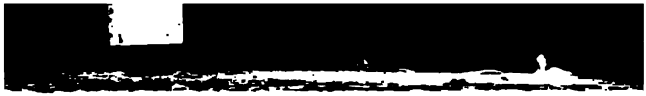
Frequently, when we paid our evening visit, the whole family had disappeared. Nor were they always to be found in the neighbourhood of the web. We presumed, therefore, that they had other hunting-grounds besides the clump of Indian corn. Indeed, we discovered one of the family webs slung between the tall legs of the thermometer screen itself, with a goodly supply of moths and green fly in the larder. Once we found Monsieur sitting in this web apparently a good deal disturbed by a large piece of thistle-down that had caught in it, and being blown backwards and forwards by the wind was creating quite a commotion. It was the more annoying since, with

the exception of this innutritious obstruction, there was absolutely nothing in the web. And as it was about ten o'clock in the morning—an unusual time for Monsieur to be on the look-out for food—his presence in the web pointed to the fact that he was hungry. Max tried to remove the thistle-down carefully, without destroying the web. But though he caught hold of the tip delicately and pulled it out carefully, its removal made a large hole in the web, and so alarmed Monsieur that he bolted up-stairs as hard as he could go and disappeared through the crack into the screen. We opened the screen to see if he was all right, and found him crouching in the corner, looking very small and frightened, and doubtless thinking he had had a narrow escape. Indeed, Monsieur seemed at all times to be more nervously susceptible than Madame. He would bolt into a corner at once if he were in any way interfered with, whereas Madame would allow herself to be pushed about in the most unceremonious way without even seeming to resent it. Max had occasion one morning to take up the thermometer beneath which Madame usually reposed, in order to shake it. As she clung to the underneath side of the thermometer, as a fly does to the ceiling, he was afraid the shaking might disturb her, so he pushed her off on to the floor with a pencil.

Even this treatment she did not take amiss, but remained quietly where she had been deposited till the thermometer was replaced, when she crept in under it again.

On the day of the tragic occurrence we visited the screen at half-past nine, and they were all as well as possible. Bébé was asleep in his usual corner, Madame beneath the thermometer, and Monsieur had gone down-stairs to see if there was anything in the larder, and was sitting on the leg, in a position that çommanded the web. He came up when we opened the screen, and sat down on the lintel, just near the hinge. It was a position both he and Madame frequently occupied. We often found them there in the morning. When the panel was shut on them, we could, by stooping down, look through the crack and see them both sitting there, with plenty of room over the back of even Madame (who was an unusually large person—about twice the size of her husband) to pass a thick sheet of writing-paper. So we had always taken it for granted that they were quite able to take care of themselves, and that any position on the lintel was safe.

Just after lunch I had an unaccountable desire to break through the rule and go and pay them a mid-day visit. "Let us go and see how Monsieur, Madame, et Bébé are getting on," I said to Max, and



we wandered towards the kitchen-garden. Max opened the screen in a leisurely manner, and then he took his pipe out of his mouth, and, stooping, gazed at the lintel in silence. I knew by his taking his pipe out of his mouth that something had happened. "What is the matter?" I asked, with a feeling of apprehension. "I am afraid," he said seriously, "that we have squashed poor little Monsieur." I felt a sudden pang in the region of my heart, and shrank back as one does from a horror of ordinary dimensions, not daring to go forward and see what had happened. All I could do was to gasp a horrified "*Oh!*" and then to ask, with suspended breath, "Is he dead?" half hoping it might be only a slight injury. "I am afraid so," said Max, who was investigating him carefully. And then I ventured to go forward and look.

Poor little Monsieur! He lay crumpled up, his body and one of his legs crushed by the panel. Apparently he had moved (probably while we were shutting the screen) to a part of the lintel where the joining of the wood allowed too little room for him to lie unharmed, and when the panel was shut up he had been crushed. Max was unable to say whether life was quite extinct, and so little was he mutilated that I could not help hoping it was a slight injury from which he would recover. We moved him

carefully with the pencil on to the floor of the house where he would be safe from molestation and have the best chance of recovery, and then we turned to look for Madame and Bébé. Neither of them seemed to be in the least aware of the domestic misfortune that had befallen them. Madame lay apparently fast asleep under the thermometer, and Bébé sat equally unconscious in his accustomed corner, not far from the scene of the disaster. My impulse was to wake them both up and tell them what had happened, so that Madame might minister to him (make beef-tea and bind up his wounds, so to speak) if there were still life in him. But one felt a sort of delicacy about interfering with the *vie intime* of creatures of whose sphere of existence one knew so little.

I paid frequent visits during the day to Monsieur's bedside, always hoping to detect some sign of life. I even went so far as to put a very small fly quite close to his nose, so that if he felt disposed to take a little nourishment he might find it near at hand. But each visit my hope of his recovery grew fainter. The little frame lay motionless and always in the same place. Towards evening it presented a shrivelled appearance which left no doubt in my mind that Monsieur was a corpse. His death cast a gloom over the day, so that I thought of little else.



My head was full of surmises as to what would become of Madame and Bébé. Would they, overwhelmed with grief, desert the thermometer screen? Who would complete Bébé's education? Would they bury Monsieur, or leave him where he was?

We visited the screen early the next morning to find that all sorts of changes had taken place. Monsieur's body had disappeared. Bébé had disappeared. Madame was no longer under the thermometer, but lying in her old position on the hinge, and not far off was—— was it little Monsieur come to life again; or another husband? It was impossible to say. For the scene that was enacted in that thermometer screen during the night, was, and always will be, shrouded in complete mystery.

XXVIII

A POLITE INTRUDER

THE behaviour of the cock was decorous and dignified throughout. Not for a moment did he forget that he was a gentleman. There was indeed nothing in his behaviour to justify the treatment he received. He was merely taking a walk on Sunday afternoon. Doubtless, the air of brooding meditation that hangs over everything on Sunday afternoon, that particular something in the air that makes us long to get away to the woods and be alone, had engendered a desire for solitude in his breast and made him feel the silly trivial chatter of the hens intolerable. There is no more gallant bird than the domestic cock. Condemned to the society of hens, who are physically, morally, and intellectually his inferiors, he never degenerates into the petty tyrant. There is always in his bearing towards them a courtly graciousness of manner, mingled with a tender



solicitude for their welfare, that is the mark of one of Nature's gentlemen. Yet it is inevitable that they should at times get on his nerves, so that he finds their society almost unendurable.

I have often thought that, were I to keep domestic poultry, I would build a separate run for the cock, where he might retire, and, so to speak, smoke a quiet pipe when so disposed. I have frequently been touched by the sight of one of these birds, cooped up in a small run, where it was impossible for him to get away from the hens, trying to create a little solitude for himself by retiring to a corner, or perching on some eminence, where he could think his own thoughts undisturbed by the gossip of the harem.

Chance favoured this particular cock on this particular Sunday afternoon. It opened a way of escape in the shape of a hole in the wire-netting, through which he could slip unobserved, and so enjoy a ramble by himself. A leap over a paling landed him in a field full of cows. This was not exactly what he wanted. He crossed the field, doubtless eying them with some apprehension, and made straight for a gap in the hedge which he observed at the opposite side. Through this he did not hesitate to walk, and found himself in a nice shady garden, with big trees, shrubberies, grass plots, and flower-beds, and not a living soul to be seen—just

the sort of pleasant shady solitude to suit his mood. He betook himself to a piece of waste ground beneath the budding chestnut trees, and proceeded to walk up and down, pausing occasionally to investigate some curiosity of the soil. It was there that we found him when we sauntered out into the garden after tea. The air of inborn courtesy that there is about a cock makes it impossible to treat him with anything but civility, even when you find him trespassing on your premises. It was so marked in this individual, his demeanour was so gracious and unassuming and so dignified withal, that not for worlds would one have hinted to him that he was on private ground. One's impulse was to beg him to make himself at home—to place the whole garden at his disposal—to ask him in to tea—do anything in fact that would put him more completely at his ease. For the appearance of five human beings, showing that the garden was not the empty solitude he had supposed, disconcerted him for a moment. He even seemed to think he had better be going, and began walking away from us, glancing at us over his shoulder with apprehension, as if to see what manner of people we were. Either he was reassured by our appearance, or perhaps he felt there was a want of dignity in beating a retreat when he was doing no harm; for he pulled himself together and slackened his pace.

Even if our feelings had not been friendly from the first, such an attitude would have disarmed us. We acknowledged his presence by a slight inclination, and walked on to the flower-garden.

I looked back now and then and caught sight of him between the trees walking up and down, and occasionally pausing to investigate something. He reminded me of an old gentleman of distinguished manners engaged in scientific research that necessitated a minute and close scrutiny of the soil beneath his feet.

We left him to enjoy himself at his leisure, and should probably have forgotten all about him, if a cry of indignation and distress, followed by an excited bark, had not recalled him to our minds. The dogs, who resent nothing in the world so much as an intrusion into what they consider their domain, and whose regard for the feelings of such intruders is simply non-existent, had discovered the visitor, and without ceremony had gone in pursuit. It required a very sharp and peremptory summons to call them to order before they had chivied the polite fowl through the hedge again. Whether the domestic cock is aware that he does not look his best when running, or is of opinion that excessive haste is incompatible with a dignified bearing, he seldom runs except when driven. Even then, as soon as he can with safety, he pulls

himself together and gives you to understand that he shows his heels under protest. As soon as the dogs were checked, the mortified fowl, with indignation flashing from his eye, protested that he failed to see why they should behave in such an unwarrantable manner towards a stranger who had no thought of molesting them.

The dogs, rebuked and sternly brought to heel, were compelled to follow us back to the flower-garden. They did it with great reluctance, and could not refrain from glancing back every minute over their shoulders as they walked, and giving snorts of indignation. It was amazing to them that we should permit a ridiculous creature with feathers to flaunt up and down as if the place belonged to him.

But the Fates were against the bird's quiet afternoon. At the end of the garden the head of a youth appeared, confronting us over the fence. Might he come over, he asked, and catch a cock that had escaped from his run and strayed into our premises? We could not deny the impeachment. Neither could we refuse permission. In another minute we had to witness our visitor being ignominiously chased along the paths, dodged round the shrubberies, pounced upon in corners, by a rude youth who seemed to think it rather fun. It was a sorry sight to see a gentleman in such a predicament, and if I could I would have

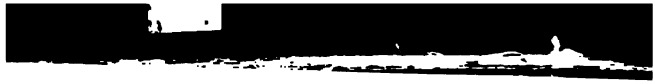
aided and abetted his escape. Indeed, if the cock could have seen the sympathy that undoubtedly shone in my eye, he would certainly have run to me for protection. But he was too much disconcerted at the turn affairs had taken to see a friend in any of us.

After spending about ten minutes in a vain attempt to catch him, the youth who had come in pursuit said he thought he had better try and drive him back through the gap in the hedge through which he had entered. And in this manœuvre we thought it well, for the cock's sake, as well as our own, to assist. We formed a semi-circle towards the gap, and began closing in. The cock saw our design, and, his dander being by this time up, determined to resist us. He dodged and evaded us so skilfully, taking immediate advantage of any gap made by our separating, that on several occasions he broke through the ranks and was off into the garden again. But we were eight to one, counting the dogs, and it was inevitable that he should be beaten. He had been great throughout, but he was magnificent when he saw the game was up. With outspread wings, on tip-toe, he fled through the gap with a shriek of defiance like a battleship discharging her last gun.

If he had continued his flight till he reached the



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fowl-yard I think we should all have felt that he had scored. But, unluckily for him, yet another chance of escape presented itself. On the other side bundles of pea-sticks had been put leaning against the hedge for some little way. Quick as thought he had slipped beneath them. The youth, who had followed him through the gap, stopped short, puzzled. The cock had disappeared.

"*I* know," he said, after a second of bewilderment, turning to the pea-sticks. "He's in here." And he began walking along peering through them. We in the garden walked along on the other side, also looking. It was one of life's little ironies that I, his only friend, should be the one to betray him. The foolish bird, like an ostrich, had carefully concealed his head and forgotten his tail. Between two of the bundles I caught sight of the shining curve of green and gold.

"Can you see him that side?" asked at that moment the youth. For a second I felt like a lady concealing a Royalist fugitive—that I would sooner die than give him up. Then I thought better, or rather worse, of it. The wretched youth would never give in till he had found him. It was useless to think of shielding him. "There he is!" I cried, "just under your hand." As I spoke a red hand descended on the tail: there was a struggle, sounds



of disappointed rage from the cock, and the hand emerged triumphant holding the cock by the legs.

Even when being carried off by the wings, his head drooping forward, he looked a gentleman—in reduced circumstances.



XXIX

MUGGINS AND SUSAN

THEY were the naughtiest pair of dogs I ever came across. Taken singly, Muggins was demure, though inclined to be spiteful; Susan was amiable and docile. But when together no dogs could match them for enterprising wickedness. Even when in repose they were always wondering what they could do next, and planning to evade supervision and slip off together round the corner on some evil expedition.

There was nothing remarkable about their appearance. Susan was a fox-terrier, good-looking and well-bred; but that was all. Muggins was something between a Bedlington and a Maltese terrier. She had thin, silky, sandy-coloured hair that almost concealed a pair of very bright eyes and a light brown nose capable of expressing more scorn than any nose I ever saw. But as to character she was



unique. I never knew a dog so packed full of character as that cross-grained, independent, sporting little Muggins. She had been bred and trained as a sporting dog, her work being (I believe) to dig the fox out when he took refuge in a hole. And though she had long since given up the career, the sporting instinct remained in her fibres.

In all their exploits Muggins was leader. Though she was glad enough, for want of better, to have Susan's support, in her heart she despised her for a poor silly creature. For Susan, though a lively, spirited little dog, was no sportswoman. She would eat the mouse, after catching it. And, when she thought Muggins was not looking, frequently played with the cat. How can one be on speaking terms, thought Muggins, with a dog who will eat a mouse (ugh !) and play with a cat ?

Their early life was spent in a flat, in a rather dull street, in London, where the only excitement was chasing cats down area steps, and watching the dogs that passed in the streets from a very narrow ledge of stone that ran round the flat outside the drawing-room windows. There was only just room for them to sit on this ledge, and there was no parapet or railing ; nothing to save them from a forty-feet drop into an area below, if they happened to topple over. But they were both absolutely free from the sense of

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this danger. They would sit there for hours, watching life in the street below, side by side, their two little backs, one smooth and white, the other sandy and yellow, reminding one of a Christmas card. If, however, anything exciting happened in the street below, such as a dog fight; or if one of their enemies passed, or a street cur happened to look up and "cheek" them, in an instant they would be on their legs, and, leaning over as far as they dared, and much further than safety permitted, would bark encouragement, abuse, or vituperation, as the case demanded, till a peremptory "Come in this minute, you naughty dogs!" summoned them inside the house.

To see them going for a walk, and trotting muzzled, and demure, beside their mistress no one could have imagined that the thought of cats had crossed their minds. As a matter of fact they were thinking of nothing else, and were scanning the horizon eagerly, though furtively, for game. When one came in sight they nudged each other. "See that cat?" said Susan. "Sh!" said Muggins, who had always seen it first; and they walked on till they were within reasonable chasing distance, when, *whish!* they were down an area after it. When this happened (which it always did three or four times during a walk) their mistress, knowing it was

hopeless to call them in, would walk on very quickly and pretend they did not belong to her.

When their mistress married and went to live at a farm in the country, of course Muggins and Susan went too. Indeed, they were by far the most important items of her luggage. And when, the morning after their arrival, they were taken out and, unmuzzled, accompanied their master and mistress round the farmyard, they could hardly believe their eyes and noses at the delightful change. Instead of a world of pavements and iron railings decorated sparsely with cats, they found a farmyard with a huge barn, stables and haystacks, all redolent of mice, and surrounded by fields smelling deliciously of rabbits. How they sniffed about that first morning! Muggins looked a different dog after five minutes. She showed her enthusiasm by ecstatically digging an enormous hole in the middle of one of the flower-beds, for which she had her ears boxed.

In London the one excitement had been the daily walk, with the possibility of cats. In the country it was the morning visit to the barn, with the certainty of mice. With suppressed impatience they watched their master eating his breakfast, imploring him with their eyes to make haste lest all the mice should be gone. As soon as he moved they were on their legs beside him. When he took his cap and stick they

gave vent to ecstatic yelps. As soon as he opened the door they were off like lightning to the door of the barn to await him. As he fumbled with the padlock you could see them quivering, and their eyes looked as if they would force it apart by sheer staring. As soon as the door opened there was a flash of hind-legs, and they had disappeared. A yell would sometimes warn you that they had surprised a mouse. When you got in, you would find them with their noses glued to a pile of sacks in the corner, behind which the wretched mouse had taken refuge, or barking frantically at the weighing machine, up the hollow tube of which the mouse had had the presence of mind to bolt, and from the safety of which it could laugh the dogs to scorn. The barn, with its mounds of grain deposited about on the floor, its piles of swelling sacks in the corners, and its huge stacks of what looked like pieces of millboard, but what were in reality "cakes" for cattle, was a splendid hunting-ground. The mouse had a fair chance, and as often as not got off.

As a rule it was Muggins who found the mouse, and Muggins who killed it. This she did in the neatest possible manner—gave it a nip and cast it on the floor dead as a door-nail, and took no further notice of it. But occasionally it fell to Susan to kill the mouse, and when this happened, unless some one

was quick to interfere, she ate it. No amount of castigation could cure her of this horrible habit. Even Muggins's scorn for her unsportsmanlike behaviour failed to prevent it. She would writhe under Muggins's withering contempt for a whole day; and the next day, if she chanced to catch the mouse, would eat it again. Muggins would have died rather than eat a mouse, and she despised and loathed Susan for the horrid habit. After Susan had disgraced herself in this way Muggins would sit and brood over it for hours, and from the glances she threw over her shoulder at Susan you knew quite well what she was feeling.

Before they had been a week on the farm they had explored the country for miles round. If left alone together for five minutes they slipped off and disappeared for the day. They would come back panting and covered with mud, take their beating in good part (it had been quite worth it they thought), and sleep off their fatigue in front of the fire. The morning after they arrived they slipped out before breakfast and went for a swim in a stream a mile off. They came back looking the most frightful objects, dripping wet, and covered with weeds and mud. Such ingenuity did they show about slipping off—looking so innocent when they were under observation, and disappearing so rapidly when they were

not watched—that nothing would explain it but that they had a code of signals. The odd thing was that they never went alone, and as long as they were let out one at a time they were safe. But if they were left alone together for half-a-minute they were off.

The arrival of the cat was an epoch. It was a novel experience for the dogs to encounter a cat who had not the least tendency to run away from them, and to be obliged to tolerate her in the room without attempting to molest her. She was an unsophisticated cat of the domestic tabby kind, who took a humorous view of life, and apparently thought dogs rather fun. When she was first introduced to them she arched her back, and threw herself into a defiant attitude against a wall, and swore. But there was reason to believe from her subsequent behaviour that it was all put on. For she was an arrant buffoon. And shortly after the first encounter she was trying to induce Susan to have a romp with her, hiding behind chairs and pouncing out at her, and boxing her ears with velvet paws. Once she ventured to stretch out a paw and give Muggins a rather affected little pat, but the look Muggins gave her warned her not to repeat the experiment. It was curious to see the faces of the dogs while that cat was prancing about and playing the fool. Of course, if their mistress had not been in the room holding them in,



and admonishing them, they would have made short work with her. As it was, they dared not move. They sat stiff and quivering, and filled with amazement at the audacity of the cat. After a day or two Susan succumbed to her blandishments, and began to indulge in spasmodic romps. Then Muggins's face was a sight to see. "Why don't you play with the cat too, Muggins?" said some one.

"Wait till I get her alone!" said Muggins, "I'll play with her!"



XXX

THE BABY DONKEY

THE farm consists of well-built greystone buildings, lying in an orderly, symmetrical fashion round neatly gravelled yards. It is modern in every line, and scrupulously clean. Though the absence of squalor and dirt may mean also the sacrifice of the picturesque, we cannot but feel as we walk about from yard to yard without even soiling our shoes that there is much to be said for the sacrifice. There is a keen, business-like "up-to-date" air about the place, as unlike that of the old-fashioned farm, sunk in thatch and orchards, surrounded by haystacks and picturesque squalor, and redolent of butter-milk and new-mown hay, as a shrewd Yorkshire man of business is unlike an Italian peasant. There is a look of brisk animation about the buildings, the walls seem to reek of modern appliances; gaunt machines perform with much whirling and noise in the twink-

ling of an eye what used to be done indolently, if more picturesquely, by dairymaids and farm-hands.

Innumerable machines are to be seen, all bright and clean with polish and paint. The king of them all is a huge, awe-inspiring traction-engine. This monster—the supreme expression of mechanical force, and perhaps the nearest approach to a land animal that man has yet succeeded in making—seems to dominate the whole of the farm. He grinds through the lanes and fields like a colossal overseer; or, resting in a vast shed, sets the rest of the farm whirling with a nod.

In the midst of modern appliances, austere symmetry, and brisk mechanical labour, the farm animals peep forth on every side. And they at least are untouched by the spirit of modern improvements. As we walk across the neatly gravelled yard, fenced on one side by greystone barns, on the other side by low sheds open to the air, two young black-headed heifers look out at us, leaning their heads over the closed doors, cheek by jowl, gently chewing as they gaze at us with large, soft brown eyes. There is the same look of brooding content about them as in the beasts of the old-fashioned, tumble-down farm of thatch and orchards and sleepy sunshine.

Near them is a lower shed with a railing in front, enclosing a little yard full of clean straw—a modern

pigsty. In it dwell the usual fat pig and her offspring, four very small counterparts. If I were to say that she looks much like other pigs, except that she is cleaner, I should doubtless be reprimanded by her owner. For she is a Berkshire lady with an immaculate pedigree. But beyond the fact that her forehead and ears show a tendency to fall over her nose there is nothing particularly striking about her, and her manners are such as you may see in any pig. She is busy munching a large root of the turnip kind. As she munches she grunts approval of its flavour, but pays not the least attention to us, as we lean over the rails to look at her. Her offspring, however—four ridiculous little creatures like the bog-oak pigs you buy at Killarney—give a terrified ejaculation and scuttle off to the far end of the yard, where they bury their noses in the straw, presenting to us four little hind-quarters decorated with absurd tails. After a minute, the boldest ventures on another glance at the apparition. Turning his head cautiously round, a small shining eye seeks us over his shoulder, and, shocked at the sight, buries itself again in the straw. We laugh, and the old sow intersperses her munching with admonishment to them not to be so silly.

A door in the wall leads us from grey yards and buildings out into a green field. Over the hedge we have a view of waving pasture land and young green

crops. Here is another modern appliance in the way of a hen-house on wheels, with a little ladder from the ground by which the hens mount to roost. And some way off, a tall, thin gamecock may be seen mounting guard and presiding over the excavations of a party of speckled hens. He looks over his shoulders at us and mutters as we approach. "I wonder whether they are coming any nearer," he obviously asks himself, "and, if so, how I can move these hens without alarming them." We stop, however, at a distance which he appears to consider safe, for he takes no steps to move his harem, and are told the story of how, the day after the gamecock and his hens were installed, the barn-door cock from the neighbouring farm came over, picking his steps carefully over the ploughed field, to challenge him to battle. How they engaged in fierce combat—the hens standing clustered together and shouting encouragement to their lord and master. How the poor barn-door cock was utterly defeated, and went back picking his steps over the ploughed field—a crestfallen figure, trying hard to look dignified, and achieving it in spite of the fact that his poor tail was blown all the wrong way by the wind. And how, after he had gone, the gamecock stood on an eminence surrounded by the adoring hens, and crowed his exultation for ten minutes on end.

The gamecock listens to the story, but misunderstands, I think, the meaning of our laughter. For he looks distinctly relieved when we turn away, and begin walking towards the other end of the field, where it slopes down to a stream with a background of trees. Down in this corner we have espied the baby donkey. Two young colts take the opportunity of our passing to show what they can do. Tossing their heads, they set off at a gallop, and scour the field in a magnificent circle, exhilarating—even exciting—to watch. We stand a minute or two to look at them, and hold our breath as with reckless abandonment they sweep down towards the fence. Our hearts jump into our mouths, for at one moment it seems as if they must dash themselves against the railings. They turn, however, just in time, and sweep the corner with a curve that almost seems to graze.

The baby donkey, with a couple of shy young heifers, is busy grazing in the paddock, which is separated from the field, in which the colts tear round and round, by the fence. The heifers look shyly at us, and "back" away. But the baby donkey knows no fear. As we approach he looks up, and, giving his head a toss, comes up to indulge in the usual impertinences and receive the usual caresses. As I look at him, I wonder if there exists anywhere else a more fascinating person than this

baby donkey, with his Whitechapel fringe hanging heavily over his forehead, his heavily-fringed brown eyes with depths of liquid blue, his soft grey nose, his elegant little legs, and tiny hoofs, with which he can give such impetuous, vicious little kicks. He is packed full of bewitching naughtiness, which sparkles in his eyes and expresses itself in delightful impulsive gestures. His manner is a charming mixture of impertinence and coaxing, interspersed with occasional nonchalant tosses of the head.

When we meet we at once begin to play the usual game. This consists of pulling and stroking his soft grey nose, or his brown velvet ears, while he tries hard to bite our fingers. He tosses his head, screws up his nose, protrudes his little white teeth, making such impertinent faces, such sulky *moues*. Every now and then, when we score a point by giving him a good pinch, he flings away from us and indulges in baby vituperation, and with impatient kicks of his hoofs says he won't play any more. Then with a sudden softening he returns to the charge, and, thrusting his soft grey nose into our hands, challenges us to begin again.

His fascinating naughtiness turns into actual wickedness when it is a question of Muggins. Muggins and Susan enjoy nothing better than a walk round the farm. And the part that Susan enjoys



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most is a game with the donkey. She flies round and round, avoiding the sharp little hoofs very cleverly, making dashes at him, now on one side, now on the other, and barking remarks obviously calculated to exasperate. But Muggins, the silky-haired terrier, who is a thorough sportswoman, does not understand running away from anything, or even dodging, and, instead of avoiding the donkey's hoofs, she stands still and makes the most shocking faces, curling her lip and showing a row of snarling white teeth. Now, the baby donkey cares no more for Muggins's snarling teeth than he does for anything else, and when he sees her making faces he tosses his head and walks towards her and tries to stamp upon her, as if she were merely an obnoxious insect. Consequently Muggins has to be picked up and carried whenever the donkey is near.

"Put that little fool down and let me stamp upon it," says the baby donkey. And he makes an impatient gesture to show what he means.



XXXI

BELLING THE CATS

"WHAT an extraordinary gait that cat has!" said a visitor as the Tiger came out of one of the shrubberies and proceeded with a stealthy sort of "stage-walk" across the lawn.

"He is only practising 'stalking' the thrushes without ringing the bell round his neck," I explained.

"But why doesn't the other cat have a bell?" they asked. For a little way off sat Tom Jones, busy washing his face with his hand, with no sign of collar or bell round his neck.

"Ah, Jones is an obstinate cat," I said, "and always gets his own way. He objected to having a bell round his neck. He said he never killed birds, only mice. And when the whole household supported him, and added, moreover, that the bell gave him a headache, I had to give in and take it off. But the Tiger is a philosopher. He adapts himself to

circumstances, instead of expecting circumstances to give in to him."

It was after the Tiger had come in four days running with a young thrush in his mouth—a soft, downy creature with a short tail—and had cast it dead at our feet with a proud "see what I have done" sort of air that we felt it was time to take stringent measures of some sort. Beating had had no effect. It seemed, indeed, to rouse his passion to slay the more. He would rush forth from the beating with gleaming eyes and lashing tail and immediately catch another. I tried speaking seriously to him. I held the poor little dead thrush, with its limp, hanging head, in my hand, and gave him a moving address on the subject of cruelty. He sat looking up at the bird with a wicked light in his eye, while his Persian tail swept backwards and forwards behind him, and I could not but feel that he was distorting my address into approval of what he had done, and encouragement to go and do it again.

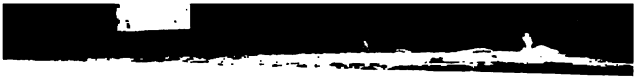
I was sitting one afternoon beneath the syringa in a corner of the garden, and considering the problem of cats and birds. Cats were all very well, but, as some one had put it, birds were even more so. The garden was just then full of them. I could see a dozen from where I sat—thrushes, blackbirds, and starlings running about on the grass looking for



worms. At each end of the grass plot is a large earthenware saucer full of water for them to bathe in. One is beneath a pink May, not far from where I was sitting, the other beneath the laburnum at the far end of the grass plot. They are emptied and filled with fresh water every morning. I rarely pass them without finding a bird taking a bath. Though they are filled to the brim every morning, in the evening they contain only a little dirty water mixed with feathers. In hot, dusty weather I empty and refill them sometimes as often as three times in the day.

As I sat considering the cat problem a thrush came out from beneath the shrubbery quite close to me. He gave a little run towards the bath, then stopped and glanced with apprehension at me. "Is she asleep?" he asked himself. I pretended that I was. Then he took another little run, and hopped on to the edge of the bath; another look at me, and a rapid glance all round. Then he jumped down into the water, which I noticed with satisfaction looked clean and cool and fresh. He gave another rapid look all round; then he spread his wings and began his tub. How he splashed! The water flew all round like a shower. He dipped his head, splashed with his wings, shook his tail. And between every movement his bright eye swept the lawn for danger. After a most delightful bath, which I could not help

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envying him, he hopped out again on to the edge of the bath, a moist thrush, with dark, bedraggled plumage. Then he darted swiftly into the shrubbery.

Immediately afterwards the Tiger issued from beneath another bush not more than a yard away. From his attitude and general air of disappointment I felt that he had been "stalking" the thrush. In another minute he might have caught him. Who knows how many he may have surprised and carried off from their morning tub! The thought was intolerable. Something must be done.

We held a consultation. Should we board him out at the home for lost cats for a month, till the young birds had grown up and had a better chance of escaping him? Visions of the Tiger, who had never been confined in all his life, shut up in a cage for a month on end, rose up to object to this plan. Should we send him to London to stay with a friend for the season? The housetop promenade would be a new and possibly amusing experience for him. And if he took to stalking sparrows—well, he would probably find London sparrows more a match for him than country thrushes. The chief objection to this plan was that we knew of no one in London desirous of having a Persian cat on a visit.

Then we thought of the chicken run—a weedy, grass-grown, wire-netting enclosure, one time the

abode of hens, but now used chiefly as a place of confinement for the visitors' dogs, when they show a tendency to scamper over the flower-beds. The Tiger should be sent to prison in the chicken run for a month, without the option of a fine. By the end of that time the young birds would be better able to protect themselves than they were at present. And lest he should be too lonely, his boon companion Tom Jones should be imprisoned with him. They were such friends that they would rather enjoy being shut up together.

We had not, however, calculated on the outrage to his sense of justice that we should commit by imprisoning Jones.

An hour after they had been shut up, I went to see how they were getting on, and was surprised to find them sitting stiffly as far apart as the chicken pen would admit. Tom Jones came towards me at once, and began telling me a long story through the wire-netting, and after a time the Tiger approached too, but in a hesitating manner. As he got near I was surprised by a low growl from Jones. The Tiger disregarded the warning, and ventured on till he was quite close. Suddenly a black paw darted forth, boxed the Tiger's ears like lightning—a red tongue appeared amid spits and growls, and, as if he was afraid to trust his temper further, Tom Jones dashed

away, brandishing his tail, to the far end of the cage.

My interference I thought would not mend matters, so I turned away. A savage shrieking caused me to look round again, and there I saw both cats locked in each other's arms engaged in fierce combat. I rushed in and separated them, gave Jones a shaking and took him out. He became calm at once and walked after me purring.

I was not going to be beaten, however. So when I had given him time to recover his temper I took him back and attempted to shut him up again. As soon as I began to open the door he flew at me, bit, scratched, kicked, and behaved in a way that I, who had always looked upon him as a gentle, amiable cat, could not have believed if I had not seen it. I was not going to give in without a struggle, however. I contrived to cast him off on to the ground inside the run, and then tried to get out quickly and shut the door. Before I could do it, however, he had sprung with a bound on to my back, and was clinging to me with all his claws. There was nothing for it but to walk out with him on my back. As soon as we were safe outside he jumped down and rubbed himself gratefully against my skirts.

Perhaps I should have persisted if it had not been that the whole household upheld Tom Jones. He



had never been known to catch a bird, they said. He was, moreover, a splendid mouser, and if he were shut up in the chicken pen the house would be overrun with mice.

So the Tiger was condemned to solitary confinement for a month. For two whole days I hardened my heart and resisted the impulse to let him out every time I passed the chicken run, and saw him run towards me "meowing" piteously. But I felt that the effort was undermining my constitution. Then a friend who came to tea, and to whom I told my difficulties, said, "Why don't you put bells round their necks, so that the birds may be warned of their approach?"

Tom Jones resisted the attempt to bell him, with his usual success. That is why he wears such a complacent look, as he sits washing his face with his hand. The Tiger submitted. But he is determined to defeat our object, by learning to walk without ringing the bell. That is why he stalks so stealthily.

XXXII

CAGED!

JONES had resisted with his usual success the effort to "bell" him. He had contrived to convey the impression that bird-catching was not a sport he cared about, and intimated, moreover, that the bell gave him a headache. And his too sympathetic friends removed it. On the very next day, however, I caught him in the act. A commotion among the sparrows in the ivy at the back of the house attracted my attention, and going round to see what it was I came face to face with Jones with a sparrow in his mouth. With flashing eyes and lashing tail he looked a perfect demon, and so unlike the gentle Jones of our domestic hearth that I hardly recognized him. As soon as he saw me, he turned and dashed away into the shrubbery, and I pursued him in vain.

I had seen enough, however, to warrant strong measures. It was all nonsense about Jones's headache. He must have a bell, as well as the Tiger;

and he was forthwith seized and adorned with a neat red leather collar with a bell attached. I am inclined to regard Jones's behaviour, when the bell was put on, as an elaborate piece of acting. He pretended he could not make out where the sound of the bell came from. Now, the Tiger realized, as soon as his collar was put on, that the sound came from the bell at his neck. And as Jones has given proof over and over again that he is a more intelligent cat than the Tiger, I have not the smallest doubt that he realized it too, but for reasons best known to himself pretended he didn't. He took a step forward ; the bell at his neck tinkled. He paused dramatically with paw uplifted interrogatively. He took another step, the bell tinkled again. He paused again, this time in an affected " Hush ! she comes ! " sort of attitude. Then he gave a rapid, rather hysterical run ; the bell jingled loudly. Then he sat down and pretended he felt faint. As no one came to his assistance, however, he began again. He turned his head to one side. Tink, tink ! went the bell. Then to the other. Tink, tink ! again. Then, doubtless to give the impression that it had sent him mad, he dashed off, with tail erect, at a gallop down the garden.

When we next saw him he appeared not only to have got used to the bell, but even to like it, and to run about unnecessarily in order to ring it. Subse-

quent observations led me to the conclusion that there was for Jones something intoxicating in the sound of the bell, something even suggestive of birds, which, instead of acting as a deterrent, acted rather as an incentive to slay. Whatever may have been the cause, the rapacity of the cats for birds increased from the day they had the bells tied round their necks. Between them—the Tiger by dint of "stalking" them without ringing the bell, and Jones by an agility born of ferocity—they captured, in the space of two days, three sparrows, two thrushes, three finches, and, alas! one nightingale, all young and partially fledged. With an inconsistency I cannot condone I contemplated the dead sparrows with comparative equanimity. The sight of the thrushes and finches worked me into a fury of rage against the cats; the nightingale moved me to tears. It seemed to me so much crueller to kill a nightingale than a sparrow. But in the matter of cruelty to animals we are all inconsistent. Of which nothing is to me a more striking proof than the fact that people who will work themselves into a passion of sympathy for the egret, whom they have never seen, will contemplate with apparent indifference the sufferings of larks and thrushes, who are, so to speak, their own flesh and blood condemned to imprisonment in cages so tiny that they can barely turn round.

The sight of the dead nightingale determined me to take steps. Immediately following it I witnessed a sight that strengthened my determination sevenfold. This was the Tiger on a voyage of discovery in the walnut tree, obviously with a view to finding nests. The walnut is an old tree, whose trunk and twisted branches are full of holes and crannies. Walking from branch to branch the Tiger investigated every cranny, venturing along dangerous passes and slender branches in order to look into holes. I stood at the foot of the tree hurling execrations up at him, commanding and entreating him to come down, expostulating angrily, and shaking a stick threateningly at him. He took no more notice of my expostulations than if he had been deaf, but pursued his course with a calm deliberation that was not only exasperating but excruciating to the nerves, for every moment I expected him to discover a nest of young birds in a hole and tear them to pieces before my eyes. He found no nests, however. Possibly, I could not help thinking, he had found them all long ago.

I had only to follow the cats round the shrubberies to see that, bells or no bells, they were the terror of the whole garden. Warning notes were piped and shrieked from bush to bush wherever they went. In fact, it was easy to tell where the cats were to be

found, by the fuss the birds were in. The nightingale became quite bold when Jones and the Tiger were in sight. He would follow them along the path from shrub to shrub, uttering a sharp pipe, followed by a sort of rattle, that apparently signified "danger!" The agony of mind of a certain nightingale (who, I had reason to suppose, had a nest in the wood-stack beneath the chestnuts), whenever the cats appeared, was the last straw. "Whether those cats like it or not," I said, "they shall be shut up in the old chicken run, and kept there till all the young birds in the garden are grown up and able to take care of themselves."

It required some firmness to put the cats in. Both resisted with all their might, growling, swearing, and scratching. But we brought determination to our aid and shut them securely in, one in each compartment of the little enclosure, with a barrel of straw for each to repose in. Five minutes after we had left them Jones was found calmly perambulating in the shrubberies. Examination of the chicken run showed a hole in the wire-netting near the roof. This was mended, and he was with some difficulty put back again. It took him ten minutes this time to effect his escape. Every day for a week was the chicken run mended, and every day did Jones escape. On the last occasion he improved the opportunity by catching no fewer than

three young birds. Then I said, "It is absurd that Jones should set us all at defiance in this way. The chicken run must be properly and effectively mended." Two skilled workmen were called in and told to make it absolutely secure all over. And for the better part of the day, each mounted on a ladder, they hammered and tapped away.

Now, Jones had resisted incarceration with increasing passion and ferocity each time. And in view of scratches in store for any one who attempted to put him in again, it was thought best that he should accomplish the journey in a sack. Consequently, in a moment that he knew not of, he was seized and popped into a sack, and before he had made up his mind what course of action to pursue, was deposited, sack and all, on the ground in the chicken run, and the door shut and bolted. There was a movement in the sack, and Jones emerged bristling. Obviously he had not known where he was. A glance sufficed, however. "This confounded place again! I won't stand it!" And with a lightning rush he had darted up the wire-netting to an ancient hole, and finding that way of escape closed, to another and another and another. I believe this rapid survey was enough to convince him that all the weak spots had been made secure. Attitude and expression alike expressed "Sold!"

He seated himself on the ground, his yellow eyes flashed with rage, and low, angry growls issued from his innermost soul.

I must say I had not thought Jones capable of such deep resentment as was proved by his subsequent behaviour. That he should be cross and sulky for an hour would not have surprised me. But that he should carry on his resentment for days, "just like a Christian," as some one observed, seemed to me to show a degree of intelligence I had not credited him with. The next morning, wishing to enliven his solitude, and thinking he would be delighted to see me, I paid him a visit. He was seated in his barrel.

"Poor little Jonesy Ponesy," I said, going up to the wire-netting and putting an encouraging finger through. Instead of jumping out with a purr and running towards me, as indeed the Tiger (who has a beautiful nature) did at once, he looked at me coldly and gave vent to a low, resentful, internal growl.

"My dear Jones," I said (growl), "you have only another fortnight of imprisonment to endure" (swears and spits); "do bear it like a man. And if you can't enjoy it yourself, think of what it is to the birds!" (Prolonged growls.)

XXXIII

IN THE FENS

WIDE, flat plains of black soil, crops, or marshy turf, stretching away on either side to a misty horizon, dotted with haystacks and windmills, and streaked with dykes of shining water, straight as arrows, and rows of pollarded willows and poplars—such was the impression of the Fen country, gathered from rushing through it once or twice in a train.

It is impossible to have anything more than a distant, bowing acquaintance with a landscape from a train window. For anything like intimacy, personal contact with the soil is necessary, or at least free intercourse with the air. Flat plains, where one's imagination has room to expand, and where one's eyes can travel far away to a distant horizon, unimpeded by hills, have always had a fascination for me above all other kinds of landscape. Consequently at first sight of the Fen country from the train window I was

over head and ears in love with it, and promised myself delightful days of close companionship with its marshes, dykes, and black, peaty soil in the future. When the summer comes, I said to myself—for it was early spring—I will pitch my tent near that far-away farmhouse, with its misty haystacks and silver-grey willows, and spend long days following the dykes as they cut their way through the turf, or wind in and out among the rushes and reeds.

An iron will or a skilful diplomacy are necessary to enable one to go one's own way in this world. Those who possess neither are mere puppets, driven hither and thither by circumstances, that seem to consider their personal inclination of the last importance. When the summer came, instead of being allowed to follow out my harmless inclination of pitching a tent in the Fens, I was seized and whirled off to places so remote, that the Fens fell back to a shadowy dream. And when I was once more in their neighbourhood summer had gone, and autumn with its shortened days, its mists, and golden-brown colours had taken its place.

Fate sometimes rewards one, for an amiable compliancy in drifting with the current, instead of trying to swim against it. A golden October, and the sight of my bicycle tethered in the shed where it had stood all through the summer, suggested that rides into the

Fens might help to ripen acquaintance into friendship, or at least bridge over the months that must elapse before I could pitch my tent on the soil, and prevent acquaintance drifting to oblivion.

The Fen country offers special advantages to the bicyclist. There are no hills. The roads are flat, and for the most part smooth. The hedges are low, or do not exist at all, so that one sees far and wide on every side. Also the roads are long and straight, and there are few sharp turns, so that what dangers there are, meet one's eyes long before they are upon one. The Fens are thinly peopled, and the few inhabitants scattered over them give one an impression of insecurity of tenure, as of venturesome folk who have settled down in a marsh. The towns by contrast have a look of solid strength, as if they had taken extra pains to make their foothold secure; driven their foundations deep and made strong their bulwarks, so that they might afford trustworthy shelter, when needed, to the folk out on the marsh. The desolate marshy flatness throws them into stony relief, like landmarks in the desert.

I am an inexperienced bicyclist, and I felt like a bird learning to fly as, with one of these landmarks for a rest, I took flights into the Fens and returned at night to my perch. These little flights led me from a mere bowing acquaintance to what I might call a

smiling acquaintance with the Fens. But it was not till one of those golden October days that come upon us sometimes as a surprise that we, so to speak, shook hands.

The beauty of the morning—mist, with a determined sun behind—tempted me to try my strength. Sixteen miles of a somewhat dull, hard, high road lay between me and the conspicuous landmark of the Fens—Ely Cathedral. But if I took a sweeping curve on either side I should pass through veritable fens—reeds and rushes, peat stacks and dykes. That should be my flight for the day—to find my way in a semi-circle to the cathedral, and, having rested, to complete the circle in my return.

It was a delicious morning. The air had that feeling of crispness and exhilaration, with a suggestion of crackling brown leaves and bonfires, that is peculiar to a bright October morning. The sun shone through the mist shortly after I had started, but there remained enough of mist throughout the day to give a dreamy beauty to the landscape. Five miles riding brought me to a characteristic fen road—straight as an arrow, with dykes of sparkling water fringed with rushes and reeds on either side, and now and then a row of silver-grey willows. On each side I looked out over acres of flat country—acres of turf, of rushes, of soil fresh from the plough, cut with reed-fringed

dykes, and dotted with windmills and haystacks. It was given to me that October day to realize more than I had ever done before, the possibilities of beauty and variety of aspect in the common haystack—from the early morning haystack shrouded in mist, that sparkled with suppressed light, to the mid-day haystack that blazed yellow in the sun, and the evening haystack that loomed dark and mysterious against a red sky. Now and then I passed horses ploughing, turning up the fine peaty soil, black, almost, as soot.

A cart track through this same black soil, too uneven for bicycling, and a journey across the river in a ferry-boat, brought me to an inn close to the river bank, where I tethered my bicycle, with a view to a ramble among the rushes. "Five Miles from Anywhere" was the inn's name. And a glance at the country around seemed to justify the name—not a house, hardly so much as a barn within sight. At one time I was told it had been a mere sleepy cottage of an inn; but some one seeing the tourist cast an appreciative eye at the spot, had seized it, washed and painted its face, knocked it into a different shape, and generally speaking shaken and wakened it up. The result is that it is no longer a sleepy cottage inn, but a smart, spry, wide-awake little place, offering comfortable accommodation for man, beast, or bicycle.

Five minutes from the inn brought me out on to the veritable fen, flat plains where reeds and rushes rustled in the wind, and where the paths were mere tracks along the side of the dykes. Being neither a botanist nor an entomologist, but a mere loafer, I was content to keep to the turf, without making my way among the rushes. I followed the path along one of the deep, broad dykes, till it curved in a high-backed bridge over a winding canal that crossed it. From this slightly higher level I looked out over the landscape, flat as a pancake on every side, and down into the clear water below me. Close to the bridge a black barge full of dried rushes was moored to the bank. Presently up the straight deep dyke came another black barge, piled up with clean wholesome dark peat. It glided silently towards me, towed by a horse, and watched by two swarthy sons of the Fen, and turned into the winding canal, passing under my bridge. I watched it for some little time, and then leaving the main path I followed the track by the side of the winding canal, along which it was swiftly gliding. On the other side of the canal were waving reeds and rushes. On my side turf. It was a lonely track, and but for the barge, the two men and the horse ahead of me, I might have thought I was the only living creature in the place, till looking down I saw I had nearly stepped upon a large bronze

caterpillar with black fur, who was busy walking along the path in the same direction.

As I stooped to move him on to the grass at one side, I noticed numbers of bronze caterpillars of the same sort, all busy walking along the bank of the canal, some one way, and some the other. It was indeed a sort of thoroughfare of bronze caterpillars. Where they were all going to I could not guess. But from the brisk way in which they walked along I gathered they were going to some sort of caterpillar market of the Fens. Encouraged by their companionship, I kept the barge in sight for some time; but smoothly and quietly as it glided it went so rapidly that I could not keep up with it, but was for ever seeing it disappear round a more distant bend. So that when I came to a place where an old man was stacking bricks of peat in long, straight walls, giving up my pursuit of the barge, I stopped and watched him, and then retraced my steps to the inn, and mounting on my bicycle once more, went on my way.

A picturesque village called Wicken, about three miles further on, threw doubts on the remoteness claimed by "Five Miles from Anywhere." I had only time to admire its quaint thatched roofs as I passed, and sped on to Soham. Here, in the oak-panelled room of a gabled inn, I had the sort of tea

a traveller delights in. Perhaps it was owing to its influence that the next five miles that brought me to the cathedral town were like spinning through air. For the whole five miles I could see the cathedral in front of me, rising impressively from the surrounding flatness—a grand monument of the time when men's motive in building a church was to build the most splendid thing they could to the glory of God, not merely a prayer-house to seat so many hundred people.

After resting in the cathedral I felt that my day had been full enough of new impressions. Instead of seeking new Fens, I wended my way quietly back by the high road. I was rewarded by a glowing sunset sky, and rows of little bonfires of weeds, sending lines of smoke into the still air.



XXXIV

THE DOMESTIC FLY

I DO not like the domestic fly. I have never met any one who did. When he is young and healthy he is a vapid, irritating creature—a weak-minded, empty-headed person, whose only idea of a joke is to persist in annoying you—too vain and pleased with himself to realize what a bore he is. When he is old and decrepit he is simply noisome.

Though such is my opinion of him, I on one occasion had my sympathies deeply stirred by an aged fly—and one in an advanced state of decrepitude at that.

I had been away for three weeks, during which time the house had been shut up, and came back to find one of these aged pensioners creeping about on my writing-table, trailing one mouldy leg after the other, and apparently in the last stages of decay. I sat and gazed at him with disgust for some minutes,

trying to think of an inoffensive way of annihilating him.

Just as it had occurred to me that the simplest plan would be to put him out of the window, he began laboriously to climb up my ink-pot, as if he had a scheme in his head. He got to the top, looked in, and then made a feeble effort to get into the ink.

Poor fellow! He's thirsty! I said, with a sudden fellow-feeling for him.

I looked round the room. There was not a drop of water in it. There had probably been none for three weeks. I had only just that moment uncovered the ink-pot. He had had nothing to drink for three weeks, and he was desperately trying to drink the ink. It was appalling! The Ancient Mariner paled beside it.

I went into the next room to get a water-bottle. When I got back he had disappeared. I went hurriedly to the ink-pot and looked inside. He had fallen into the ink and was struggling wearily with the black waves.

I thought to myself, If I don't look at him for five minutes he will be dead, which will, after all, be best for him and best for me.

So I put down the water-bottle, and for about ten seconds looked the other way and tried not to think

about him. I have never felt so mean and cowardly in my life as I did in those ten seconds. To let a fellow-creature (for after all he was a sort of fellow-creature) slowly drown in ink! Could anything be more ghastly!

After a mental struggle of about two seconds, I found I was incapable of it. My higher nature triumphed, and I held out a pen-holder to him. He tried frantically to climb up. But it was too slippery; he fell back and continued to flounder hopelessly in the ink. I must try something else. I began to grow quite hot and nervous for fear he should drown, and in my haste tore a piece of manuscript paper (destroying thereby half-an-hour's work), and made it into a sort of little leaf. With this I successfully scooped him up.

He seemed at first bewildered to find himself suddenly on dry ground again. But he soon grasped the situation, and began scraping the ink off his wings with his hind-legs, in a breathless, unsteady sort of way. Poor fellow! He was excited and frightened after his sudden immersion in that black and deadly sea. I put him down on the table, and the cleaning process went on, though a trifle less energetically. Then I remembered the water.

Was he still thirsty? Or had he swallowed enough ink to make him forswear all liquids for the

future? I would try him. I dipped a pen-holder into the water, and deposited a drop about the size of a pin's head, a tiny crystal ball, just in front of his nose. He took a staggering step forward and plunged his trunk into the middle of it and drank—deep draughts like a thirsty horse. I could almost hear him swallowing. In a few seconds he had drained the drop dry. I at once deposited another —a larger one, about the size of a pea—a little further off. He made for it eagerly, and this time applied his trunk to the side, and took several good pulls, which reduced the globule to about half its size.

He then withdrew his trunk, preparatory, as I thought, to flying away, without a word of thanks to me, his benefactor. But not a bit of it! He walked up a little closer, held his head over it, and deliberately washed his face in it. He did indeed! With his long, thin, bony arms and hands he soused the clean water over his poor old inky face, scrubbed the back of his neck and behind his ears, and then carefully washed each arm as high as his shoulder.

I am not a sentimental woman, but, I assure you, that when I saw that aged fly washing his face with his hands I was moved almost to tears. In my impulse of pity and admiration I felt I could do

anything for him. I placed a dainty morsel of sugar, moistened with water, in front of him, and had the satisfaction of seeing him eat till he swelled visibly. He then turned and began hurriedly walking towards me, obviously with another plan in his head. But he was not yet quite steady on his legs. Some irregularity in the table-cloth tripped him up, and he lay on his back kicking. He made some remarks which I imagined to be unsuitable, but it seemed to me that the occasion justified them. So I gave him a hand—or rather, a pen-holder—up, without even reprimanding him, and he acknowledged the attention with a polite bow. As for what followed, you may believe it, or not, as you please; but I do assure you that the queer old chap made his way, with feverish determination expressed in every movement, to my elbow, climbed laboriously up my sleeve till he was on a level with my ear, and there made a little speech, expressing his deepest gratitude for what I had done. He then flew towards the window, humming a little hymn of praise. I opened it politely, and he swept out into the great world.

As for me, my bosom swelled with noble schemes for the benefit of destitute flies. A cat left to starve in an empty house has ten thousand champions. Who thinks of the starving flies? No one—except the starving cat. I would build

shelters and homes for them. Each one should be provided with a drop of water, and the fiftieth part of a lump of sugar. They would flock to me in thousands, and I would put them to bed in rows and attend to all their creature comforts.

And then I thought of the consequences——

After all, one may carry philanthropy too far.

XXXV

LADYBIRDS

THE ladybird is a charming insect, and enjoys a wider popularity possibly than any other of its kind. Its charm is inherent, and has nothing to do with supposed moral worth, as is the case with the busy bee and the industrious ant. If I were asked to say wherein lies its charm I should say partly in its redness and partly in its spots, and partly in the halo of fairy-like romance and poetry that surrounded it in the picture-books of my infancy. But chiefly from the fact that since, when at the age of six the discovery of a ladybird on my sleeve, and the assurance that it foretold a present, was followed by the prompt, and to me miraculous appearance of a new doll, I have looked upon it as a "bird" of good omen. "Will it *really* bring me a present?" I asked, with repressed excitement. "Yes, really," was the answer, "especially if we put it on a blossom it likes." And

after much deliberation and hunting in the garden, we put him on a white moss rose, where I have no doubt he had a good time among the green-fly.

When during one of those unexpected streaks of sunshine that visit us sometimes in November I found the window in Max's room possessed by a veritable swarm of ladybirds, I felt a thrill of expectation, as if some unexampled piece of good fortune were about to befall us. With ladybirds that could be counted by scores on the window-pane, it seemed to me that we might ask anything we pleased of fortune.

Where had they come from? I wondered. Do ladybirds lay eggs, and was this swarm the result of one enormous hatching, or had they, like good fortune, dropped from the sky? In response to my inquiry Max produced a pile of books of information about insects. It is my invariable experience of books of information that they never tell you what you want to know. Consequently I was not at all surprised to find that though they abounded with facts I already knew (such as that the ladybird is red and has spots—things a child can see at a glance), or with immaterial facts about its anatomy which I did not desire to know, not one of them made a remark which might have enlightened me as to the cause of their sudden, mysterious appearance in the middle of

November, on the window-pane of a room reeking with cigar smoke.

The books were equally reticent as to what they lived on besides green-fly, and left me quite in doubt as to whether they were likely to find any invisible means of sustenance on a smooth window-pane; whether they would die of starvation if they didn't; whether they would be likely to want water to drink; whether, in short, they would prefer to be left where they were, to be put out into the garden in the cold, or into the warm greenhouse among the plants. Having nothing whatever to guide me as to their treatment, I thought it best to leave them alone, and contented myself with the assurance that good luck would certainly follow in their wake.

Though they had made their appearance in the midst of sunshine, by the afternoon, snow had begun to fall, and we were enveloped in winter. I went to see how the ladybirds were getting on, and found them all huddled together in the corners of the window-panes. Again my inquiring mind wondered were they cold, were they all dying of hunger, or were they merely going to sleep? And again the insect books failed to enlighten me. For a moment I thought of sweeping them all into a box and taking them out to the greenhouse, where at least they could have green-fly for supper. But the thought

that they had possibly come into the house on purpose to go to sleep for the winter deterred me, and I left them for the night, hoping I should not find them all dead in the morning.

Sunshine was busy melting the snow when I went to look at them after breakfast, and I half expected to see them swarming busily over the window-panes again. But they were still huddled together in the corners. As I looked at them I noticed that each group was covered with what looked like a gauze veil. I gazed at them for a moment and wondered whether it was worth while consulting the insect books again. Something attracted my attention. I looked a little closer, and stood horror-struck. Each group was swathed around in spiders' web; while at a distance of a few inches from each sat a hungry-looking spider mounting guard over his prey, and apparently gloating over the thought that he could feast on ladybird pie for the rest of the winter.

I have, it will be remembered, a morbid horror of a spider, which I have never completely overcome. One of my grievances is that Max has a morbid love of them. He says they are interesting creatures, and very intelligent. Housemaids are forbidden on pain of dismissal to disturb any that may chance to take up their abode in his room; and the skeleton in my cupboard is that in his dressing-room he keeps a

spider's nest, a sort of yellow bag, which at any moment may burst open and let loose ten thousand of these awful insects.

The sight of these creatures, gloating over the ladybirds, made me shudder. But I did not hesitate an instant as to what course to pursue. I took an ash-tray and a quill pen from the table. With the feathered end of the pen I carefully rubbed the cobwebs off the backs of the ladybirds, and then holding the ash-tray beneath them swept and pushed them into it. I dared not look at the spiders while I was doing it. But I could feel that they were nearly bursting with rage and disappointment. In fact, I was terrified lest they should spring at me and bite me before I had finished my task. Some of the ladybirds added to the difficulties of my task by behaving in a foolish and perverse manner. They clung to the window-pane, so that I had the greatest difficulty in removing them. Or they tucked their legs away and fell off, as soon as they were touched, on to the floor, where (the carpet being red) I had great difficulty in finding them again. But I had determined to rescue them, and rescued they had to be, whether they liked it or not.

When I had collected about twenty in the ash-tray I walked rapidly out to the greenhouse, where I distributed them over the cyclamen and primula

plants. I found that twenty was as many as I could look after at a time. For as soon as they found themselves in the ash-tray they woke up and became very active, walking out of the tray and over my hand and up my sleeve, from whence they had to be driven back with the pen. From the number of journeys I took backwards and forwards between Max's room and the greenhouse I gather that there were several hundred ladybirds. It took me most of the morning to complete the work of rescue. But I think I have rarely felt so pleased with myself as when I put the last ladybird on a white cyclamen blossom. I went back to make sure that I had left none behind, and laughed mockingly in the spiders' faces—at a safe distance.

It is nearly six months since it occurred. I looked forward to a prompt recognition on the part of the ladybirds. If kind treatment of one little ladybird had been repaid by a waxen doll, what might one not expect from benefits conferred on several hundreds, in the face of such difficulties! It will hardly be believed, but not one of those ladybirds vouchsafed the faintest recognition of my services.

Whether they forgot, whether they resented my interference, or whether the spiders had something to do with it, I do not know, but it is a fact that the



good luck that I was led to expect has not yet put in an appearance. If the six months run out without any acknowledgment, my faith in ladybirds—one of the relics of my childhood—will bid fair to be destroyed.

XXXVI

'MASTER PITT'

It was in the autumn, when the chestnut trees were strewing the paths with a thick carpet of brown leaves and still browner horse-chestnuts, that Abel fell in love with the individual, whom, in spite of his years (verging on fifty), we always address and allude to as "Master Pitt." Master Pitt was occupied at the time with broom and barrow in sweeping up the chestnuts and leaves and wheeling them away to a mound in the corner of the paddock.

The Schipperke, wandering about the garden, suddenly found his interest roused by the shining brown balls that strewed the ground beneath the leaves. He bit one or two to pieces to see what they were made of, and then started a little game with them on his own account—throwing them up, and running after them, and searching for them among the leaves. By way of amusing him, Master Pitt



now and then picked up a chestnut and threw it away into the shrubberies or out on to the lawn. This won Abel's heart. He then and there became Master Pitt's sworn ally and inseparable companion.

One needs to be a dog to understand the supreme joy of running after anything, or the possibilities of delight that exist in sticks and stones and balls. The amount of blissful emotion some dogs seem to extract from sticks and stones leads one to suspect them of being inarticulate poets. Had we but the wit to translate their ecstatic yelpings, doubtless our literature would be enriched by many a "Lay of the Log" or "Epic of the Stone." In some dogs the mere sight of a stick or a stone seems to produce a poetic frenzy bordering on insanity. This seems to be especially the case when the objects are so large that they have difficulty in coping with them. Why mere size should appeal to them in this way I have never been able to find out. But I imagine there must be a subtle and acute satisfaction to some dogs in encompassing with their jaws something that might be supposed (anatomically) to be too large for them, or in dragging along something whose unwieldy bulk renders the operation almost an impossibility.

I have known a fox-terrier in whom the sight of a stone just too large for his jaws to encompass would produce such a wild emotional melancholy that he

would sit on the ground with the stone between his paws, and, with his head raised, send wails of sublime despair into the sky. In his case, after frequent observations, I came to the conclusion that the supreme agony of bliss was caused by the fact that the stone was just too large for his jaws. That the essence of joy lay in the size, I gathered also from the fact that stones moved him more or less deeply according to their size—the greater the stone the deeper the emotion, and *vice versâ*. I have seen him greatly moved by a stone so firmly embedded in the ground that he could not dislodge it. In this case, the fact that he could not move it, apparently created the impression of size and weight. For it was a comparatively small stone.

Jenny, the Dandy Dinmont, on the other hand, is more susceptible to sticks. She is worked into a frenzy of mock rage by a log or branch of a tree, so large that she can with difficulty drag it along. Her emotion is not so intense as that of the fox-terrier over the stone, for there is a certain amount of simulation in it. While she bites and shakes the log with savage growls of fury, her tail belies her rage by wagging excitedly. Every now and then seizing the log by its most manageable end, she sweeps the lawn in a triumphant dash, her head raised so as to keep the log free of obstacles, and her hair blown

back from her face by her speed. In these moments she appears to taste a satisfaction that is denied the fox-terrier with his stone. But difference of temperament may account for this.

With Abel, I believe, the emotion arises from a more elementary and primitive instinct—that of the pursuit of prey. The sight of something in rapid flight moves him to pursue. When he has caught the chestnut, the desire to annihilate it struggles for some moments with the wish to have it thrown again. He longs to pursue it again, and yet he cannot bear to give it up. He rushes back with it and drops it at Master Pitt's feet—seizes it again, drops it, and dashes at it again if Master Pitt attempts to touch it—and displays a charming vacillation before he can make up his mind to let Master Pitt pick it up and throw it again. If, however, Master Pitt shows no eagerness to throw the chestnut, he will worry him persistently till he does, dropping it at his feet, picking it up and dropping it again, and drawing his attention to it with his sharp little bark. A familiar sight in the autumn was Master Pitt beneath the chestnut trees, broom in hand and wheelbarrow by his side, busily sweeping up the leaves, as if unconscious of all else, and before him on the ground a little black Schipperke, gazing at him with painful eagerness, his ears pricked, and his whole



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body stiff with anticipation—every now and then making a dash forward to draw Master Pitt's attention to something at his feet, and uttering little irrepressible squeaks that sounded as if they were escaping by accident from an indiarubber bag full of sound.

"It's one of them old conquerors he wants," Master Pitt would say (alluding to the chestnuts), and taking one up, he would throw it where the shrubs were thickest, adding, "He'll hunt for it all the morning, and not give up till he's found it."

When chestnuts began to run short Master Pitt generally contrived to have a ball in his pocket to amuse his little friend. Often this was an india-rubber tennis-ball, picked up when sweeping the paths. On one occasion I was attracted by Abel barking in the field. I looked over the hedge and saw him bending over the ditch that runs along one side of the field, as if he were playing the part of Narcissus. There is about a foot of water in the ditch, and the banks are steep. Abel, who is nothing if not cautious, was carefully getting down the bank and approaching the water—at first I thought merely to drink; but his eager stare and excited barks assured me that this was not the case. I got through the hedge to investigate the mystery, and found that his precious ball had been thrown into the water, and

that he did not know how to get it out without wetting his feet, which he particularly dislikes. As I approached he succeeded in letting himself down so far that he could touch the ball with his nose. But the touch sent the floating ball off to the other side of the ditch, like the floating apples on All Hallow E'en. With a squeal Abel leapt across and began the same tactics on the other side, with the same result. How long he would have gone on if I had not taken pity on him and fished out the ball I do not know; for his patience is inexhaustible.

Balls and chestnuts are not the only bonds of union between Abel and Master Pitt. There are others whose grounds are less easily discernible. Master Pitt's pursuits have a fascination for the Schipperke. He will follow him about for hours, watching him scrape the nice green tinge, that comes from sprouting moss and grass, from the garden paths and hoe up weeds. And he will sit all day watching him dig and plant vegetables in the kitchen-garden. In the cold weather Master Pitt made him a little tent to shelter him from the wind while engaged in this sedative occupation. Three sticks were driven into the ground to form a semi-circle. Master Pitt's coat was hung on them to make a screen, and a bit of sacking was put on the ground for Abel to lie on. When the wind was cold this little erection was always to be seen in

the neighbourhood of Master Pitt's operations—Abel with ears pricked and paws crossed, mounting guard inside.

The corner of the paddock, which is Master Pitt's special domain, is also a most desirable haunt in Abel's eyes. There Master Pitt keeps the mounds which are his special pride—mounds of loam and soil, mounds of leaf manure, and mounds that look like large brown puddings with wisps of straw sticking out, and which contain potatoes, carrots, turnips, and beet-roots. There, too, he generally keeps a nice-smelling bonfire, on to which he piles weeds that fizz and shriek. There, too, the wheelbarrow is emptied of its contents, and starts again for a new load. At a sign from Master Pitt Abel leaps into the empty barrow, and has a ride back to the garden, which he very much enjoys. Possibly it stirs memories of the time when he was a little Belgian barge-dog. And indeed there is something suggestive of a pilot in a boat in the way he stands in the "bows" of the barrow, with his fore-paws resting on the front, and his eyes scanning the route.



XXXVII

LONELY

I WAS enjoying a modified form of that detestable thing called a rest cure, in which solitude and separation from everything one likes best are the principal elements. I spent the greater part of the day in bed being rubbed and fed. Towards four o'clock I got up and went downstairs and had a dreary substitute for tea in a glass of milk. At seven I had a solitary supper, and went to bed. It was at this solitary meal that I first met the earwig.

A friend had sent me a beautiful bunch of white chrysanthemums. I had arranged them loosely in an old blue-and-white Chinese vase, and put them in the middle of my supper-table, where they might enliven my evening meal. I was refreshing my eyes with their whiteness the evening after they had arrived, when an earwig came out of one of the blossoms, and walking to the end of one of the

outermost white petals, looked out over the expanse of tablecloth. I do not like earwigs. My usual greeting to them is to stamp upon them. Whether it was that the dearth of interest in the life I was leading invested this particular specimen with an importance he would have lacked had he come upon the scenes at another time I do not know; but I regarded him without the least feeling of repugnance or antagonism, and even with something approaching to interest. He went as far as he dared along the petal, and craned his neck over the white tablecloth and moved his antennæ as if he would sample the atmosphere. He seemed to be shading his eyes with his hand to his forehead that he might see as far as possible.

When he had gazed for a few seconds he turned round, and getting off the blossom went down the stalk a few inches till he came to where a leaf from another chrysanthemum made a sort of landing-stage to another blossom that looked out on another side of the room. Up this he climbed, and took a survey from this stand-point. He repeated this operation till he had surveyed the room from every possible point of view.

Then he came back to the blossom on which I had first seen him, and gazed long and wonderingly across the blank white tablecloth at me, at the end of

the table. Then it occurred to me what was the matter with him. He didn't know where he was. He had been picked—torn from his native village, and possibly (who can tell?) from the bosom of his family, while he slept, and had awakened to find himself quite alone in a perfectly new world. As he gazed I felt that he was straining his eyes into the distance in the vain hope of catching sight of some familiar landmark, and racking his bewildered brain to think what possibly could have happened to him. I tried to imagine what it would be like to awake one morning, and find myself in a world that was as different to my present world as is a dining-room to a flower-bed in a garden. The nearest approach I could make to imagining his feelings, was to picture myself like Robinson Crusoe, alone on a desert island. But I felt that it was an inadequate picture of his state. For I, having read of desert islands, should probably recognize one when I saw it, whereas the chances are that the earwig had never even heard of such a thing as a dining-room.

Thus idly and musingly I watched him the first day, and then went away and forgot about him till the next evening, when, after I had been seated about five minutes, he came out again and looked at me. It seemed to me that his bewildered look had given way to one of boredom. He was lonely and bored.

It was quite natural that he should be so, I thought. For what could he possibly have found to do all day long, all alone on a bunch of chrysanthemums on a dining-room table?

I found myself wondering how he had spent the day, and whether it had seemed as interminable to him as it had to me. I felt convinced that it had. After he had gazed in my direction for some moments, he turned and began his promenade over the chrysanthemums. Instead of running up to the tops of the blossoms and gazing out into the room, he proceeded to look about underneath the leaves in a way that clearly indicated that he was looking to see if there were not possibly another earwig anywhere on the desert island. His movements became more languid as he went on, and after a time he gave it up as hopeless, and sat down and thought.

The next evening I found him waiting for me when I came down to supper, and the next and the next. On the fourth evening it struck me that he was distinctly thinner than the first time I saw him. He was probably starving! With sudden compunction for not having thought of it before I hastened to put little morsels of various viands on the blossom before him. He either took no notice of them at all, or turned away impatiently as if the sight of them worried him, giving me to

understand that when the mind is sick food is a poor consolation.

A day or two later when I sat down to my supper he had disappeared. I turned the vase round and investigated the blossoms carefully. He was nowhere to be seen. A conviction gripped me that he had fallen into the water. The possibility had occurred to me before. I waited till the maid had left the room, and then lifting the Chinese vase off the table I carefully raised the bunch of chrysanthemums out of it and looked inside. It was as I had feared. He had fallen in. To my relief I saw that he was still struggling, feebly, it is true, but enough to show that life was not yet extinct. I hastened to rescue him with the stalk of one of the blossoms. He climbed up it so easily that I wondered he had not done it before, and it crossed my mind that possibly he had determined to put an end to his monotonous existence by drowning himself. The fact that he never made the attempt again, however, threw discredit on this assumption.

Indeed, I should have missed him at once if he had disappeared again. I began to look upon him as a companion at my solitary meal. I used to spend the whole time watching him as he walked about on the blossoms, thinking about him, wondering what he felt like, and indulging in endless surmises as to his

history, his age, his sex. But wherever my idle fancy led me, I always ended up with the fact that he was the loneliest creature I had ever come across. Perhaps he moved my compassion most when, as he was fond of doing, he would get on to the top of the tallest chrysanthemum and look up at the globes of electricity over his head, as if he were wondering what they were and what had become of the sky.

That no one in the house knew of his existence except myself, I gathered from the fact that no one molested him, that he had so far escaped being stamped on. Considering how likely it was that this should eventually be his fate, I wonder I did not take pains to ward off such a catastrophe.

He had been there nearly a fortnight when the chrysanthemums began to show signs of withering. It seemed to me that he was conscious that something was wrong, and that an uneasy feeling of impending disaster gave a dash of grimness to his loneliness. I began to wonder what would become of him when the chrysanthemums were thrown away, and pictured him weeping and gnashing his teeth in the outer darkness of the dust-heap. I resolved to save him from such a fate. Though I should miss him dreadfully, I would remove him from the chrysanthemums and drop him gently on to a carnation plant that grew beneath my sitting-

room window. I came down one evening prepared to do this before I sat down to my meal. As I went into the room, the maid, who had just put down the viands, was busy bending down looking for something on the floor. Before I had time to say anything she gave a vindictive stamp. I knew at once what had happened. I felt quite sick.

"What is it, Mary?" I contrived to ask.

"Only a nasty earwig, m'm, off the chrysanthemums. But I've killed him," she said cheerfully.

I said nothing. How could I explain to her what she had done? How could I expect her to understand, even if I did? She would think I was going off my head.

"I should not have minded so much," I said, trying to excuse a tear that I brushed away as I rose from my untouched meal, "if he had not been so *dreadfully* lonely."

XXXVIII

AN AMATEUR PROVIDENCE

It was the dullest of dull railway stations. I was alone, and had one hour and a half to wait. One of those kind friends of lone women, a railway porter, conducted me to a waiting-room, and left me with the comforting assurance that he would come and call me when my train was ready to start. So I felt I had no responsibility—only to wait and while away an hour and a half.

I stood at the door of the waiting-room and looked out. It was a dull November day, and there was a persistent drizzle of rain. There were trickly noises going on, and everything was wet. Wet passengers were walking up and down the wet pavements, with wet umbrellas; wet trains kept snorting in and out, and even the railway whistles sounded moist. Inside the waiting-room it was even more dreary. It was one of those long strips of rooms on a central plat-

form. There was a dismal-looking fire at one end, into which an occasional drop of rain fell with a "squish," a polished yellow table down the middle with a water-bottle and two tumblers on it—a hard, polished bench along each wall, muffed-glass windows on either side, and texts and time-tables all over the walls. The end of the table nearest the fire was covered with knitted dolls' hats, babies' socks, and woollen shawls, and beside it sat a mournful-looking woman engaged upon another doll's hat. Her eyes were downcast upon her work, and her eyebrows were raised, as if she were thinking over some hopeless problem, while she mechanically clicked away at the dainty pink object that was gradually taking the form of a hat.

I pulled the end of the hard bench nearer to the fire and tried to warm my feet, which were cold and damp, and watched her because I had nothing else to do. I began at her head and subjected her to a minute scrutiny. I gazed at her smoothly-brushed hair, at her pale face with its smooth, shiny skin, counted the buttons of her neat black dress, watched the needles clicking round the hat, and finished up with her cashmere boots—wondering whether she had come in them, or had changed them after she arrived.

Then I read all the texts and train advertisements

that adorned the opposite wall, quite mechanically, without in the least taking in what they were about; and then my attention was attracted by a buzzing that was going on in the opposite window.

Glad of any distraction, I got up and went over to see what it was, and found a bumble-bee burrowing in the corner of the window-sill in a persistent way, and making an intermittent sort of buzzing hum. He was apparently as bored as I was at finding himself in a dull waiting-room, and wanted to get out; but failing to observe that the window a little above his head was an inch open, he was trying to effect an exit through the window-sill. I picked up a half-burnt wooden match that lay on the ledge, and pushing him gently with it tried to turn his attention upwards to the open window. He declined my help politely, but without looking round, raising one of his paws in a deprecating way as if to say, "Pardon me, I don't think you quite understand the situation," and, burying his nose in the corner, continued to burrow even more energetically than before. I smiled at his folly, and again pushed him a little more firmly, but still kindly, towards the open window. He again declined politely, but a little more emphatically, and I gathered from his gestures that he was assuring me that even a bumble-bee knows his own business best. For about ten minutes I persisted in my effort

to help him with the match, but with the most scrupulous politeness, and with the same deprecating uplifting of his paw, he persisted in declining my assistance, till my patience was exhausted and I turned from him with a gesture of irritation at his obstinacy.

My eye was caught, as I was about to turn from the window, by a spider. A spider inspires in me, as I have said before, feelings of terror and loathing, and it has always been a matter of the greatest surprise to me that there exist people who not only tolerate, but actually like him—just as I have never ceased to marvel that there exist people who like sugar in their tea. A cup of weak, warm, milky tea, with several lumps of sugar in it, well stirred up, is to me the most nauseating beverage that exists; and yet I believe there are thousands of people who drink great cups of it every day, and think it delicious. And a large, fat, hairy spider, with long legs, and a malignant expression, is to me a thing at once terrifying and loathsome, and yet I have reason to believe there are hundreds of people who think him quite delightful. I number among my friends a man who actually has one of these monsters for his best friend. He will allow it to walk over his hand or up his back, and assures me that he feels nothing but affection for it. He tells me that this creature has its nest in the ceil-

ing over his bed, and that frequently, when he is lying in bed in the morning, it lets itself down by a string till it is within a yard of his face and looks at him —makes some appropriate remark such as "Good morning! Have you used Pears' soap?" and goes up again.

The spider I now observed on the window-pane was a little fellow of an ordinary domestic kind. What attracted my attention was the excited manner in which he was behaving. He was running backwards and forwards over the corner of the window-pane, and every now and then getting up on the ledge formed by the window frame, and looking out to the opposite side like a coastguardsman.

I soon discovered the cause of his excitement. At the opposite side of the window-pane was a little fly deliberately walking towards him—into the jaws of death. The spider, in his excited running backwards and forwards, was covering the corner of the window-pane with a fine tracery of cobweb, in the hope that the little fly would catch his foot in it and fall an easy prey.

I do not care for little flies, but to stand by and see one treacherously done to death by a spider is a thing I am incapable of. I had recourse to the match end again. Putting it in front of the fly's nose I barred his way with it, saying, "Go back, you little

fool!" He moved slightly to one side to evade the match, but otherwise took no notice of it, and proceeded on his course, making a bee line for the spider, who was seated aloft on the ledge (so as to be out of sight, I suppose), in an eager, pouncing attitude, most horrible to behold.

He looked thin, I thought, and a wave of pity mingled momentarily with my disgust. Poor thing! he had probably not had a meal for a month, and felt just as I should if, when in a half-famished condition, I saw a dish of smoking hot cutlets travelling towards me. Then I looked at the fly and instantly put myself in his place. Imagine being pounced upon from above by a monster the size of an elephant, with eight long black legs that would clutch one and squeeze one to death while he devoured one! I very nearly fainted on the spot at the thought, and I instantly put the match in front of the fly again, and this time gave him a little push. He stopped for a second, swerved slightly to one side, and then pursued his course with the same persistence. I put down the match and barred his course with the end of my finger — a more formidable obstacle. He paused again and looked at it, as if he wondered what the dickens it was, and then calmly walked to one side and went on as before.

In a few seconds he had reached the middle of the

pane. I glanced at the spider. It seemed to me that he was trembling with excitement, and his attitude was more horribly suggestive of a pounce and a clutch than ever. I took a piece of paper and tried to shove the fly back. He stood as firm as a rock, and gave me to understand that he would allow himself to be broken to bits rather than budge an inch. He was now about three-quarters across, and the web was only an inch or two away. I was just wondering whether I had not better save him from the awful fate that awaited him by crushing him with my finger when—he caught his foot in an outlying web—he staggered—there was a pounce from the ledge——

"This is your train, m'm," said the porter, putting his head in at the door; and the frantic yells of the victim and the fiendish chuckles of the monster were drowned in the clanging of the station bell.

That night I awoke and saw the ghosts of the bumble-bee and the fly sitting on the bottom rail of my bed.

"You were a little stupid this afternoon," said the bumble-bee. "In the corner where I was burrowing there was a buried treasure that I had set my heart on excavating. I knew my way to the window as well as you did, and as soon as I had found what I wanted went out through it."

"You hindered me a great deal with that match and your finger," piped the fly, "but you meant it kindly, and I forgive you. You could not possibly have known that I was tired of my existence and was bent on putting an end to it, and that to walk into the jaws of the spider was the simplest way of effecting it."

XXXIX

PAN

Not "the great god Pan," but a shaggy black Russian poodle of the same name. Superficial observers might take him for a French poodle, for there is a certain resemblance in the black curly coats. Seen side by side, however, there is a contrast in their build. Pan is hewn on a larger scale than the French poodle. He is looser of limb and heavier of foot. The latter may be smart and sharp, but in the eyes of Pan's admirers the French poodle is a finnicking piece of goods and an affected dandy, especially when his hair is tied up with ribbons.

I made Pan's acquaintance when he was three months old. We had taken a house in Surrey for the summer, and Pan came to stay with us. His master and mistress were going abroad for two months, and not knowing what to do with Pan they asked us if he might come and pay us a visit in the

country. So Pan arrived one day with a label round his neck, and with bits of straw clinging to his coat, and, with the frank geniality characteristic of large puppies, made himself perfectly at home in five minutes.

Looking back over a somewhat varied experience, I think I may say Pan was the most irresistible puppy I have ever known. The stoniest heart was not proof against his blandishments. His manners were so beguiling, his puppy ways so engaging, that even stern people who did not like dogs relaxed and fell victims to his charms. He was a black, soft, woolly thing, with large paws and expressive brown eyes, a bewitching nonchalant way of flopping about that was most attractive, and a fund of youthful spirits and hilarity that seemed to be catching—for the whole establishment became infected with them.

The house we had taken was a staid, respectable-looking rectory. There was let with the house an old dog—such a dog as is usually let with the house—a fat, decrepit spaniel, that seemed incapable of doing anything but eat and sleep, and appeared to find it too great an exertion even to wag his tail. Perhaps the most remarkable change that took place in the establishment was the awakening of this lump of canine torpidity. For the first few days he did nothing but gaze with heavy-eyed surprise at the

novel spectacle of a galumphing puppy, who treated him without ceremony, pulled his tail, bit his legs and ears, tore round and round and rolled on the grass from pure hilarity. After he had gazed for a day or two his torpidity began to stir with re-awakening life, and he took to following the poodle puppy about and watching its delirious gambols. The climax of his awakening was reached about a fortnight after Pan's arrival, when both dogs were found careering round and round the lawn one evening, each with a table napkin in his mouth, which he had seized from the dinner-table.

Not only the aged spaniel, but the whole establishment, seemed to be infected with high spirits during the poodle puppy's sojourn. The old rectory that had lain slumbering in its old-fashioned garden woke up and twinkled its French windows on to the lawn which was Pan's favourite playground. As for the inmates, not one could resist Pan's invitation to a romp. Most of them played with him all day long; his crimes, which consisted for the most part of carrying anything he took a fancy to (sofa cushions, bedroom slippers, or hats) out into the garden—presumably, for private diversion when he had time—were condoned and winked at, and his education totally neglected. It was perhaps as well that the visit to us lasted only two months, or such

a system might have permanently demoralized him.

He had been about a month in the house, and we had all more or less lost our heads about him, when, to our dismay, he caught distemper. Russian poodles were delicate dogs, we had heard. What if Pan should die! No one could contemplate the possibility, and the whole household set to work to nurse him through it. Dog books were consulted; the local "vet." was sent for, and beef-tea was prepared. He must be kept warm, we knew; so he was at once established in a room with a fire, and had a blanket pinned round his neck by way of a shawl, and a large heap of straw to lie on. The "vet." commended our treatment, and prescribed a bottle of physic as well. Beyond the fact that he absolutely refused to touch the physic, he was an exemplary patient—did, for the most part, what he was told, and wagged his tail feebly to show his gratitude for our attentions. On the fourth day he was so ill that we thought he would die, and that night more than one member of the family paid a visit to the sick-room, half fearing to find that Pan had breathed his last.

He did not die. The next day he had apparently passed the crisis, and his recovery was rapid. When he was convalescent a younger member of the family

took to wheeling him about the garden in a wheelbarrow, explaining that "carriage exercise" was good for invalids. Pan took to it at once, and seemed to find it a particularly diverting form of exercise. In fact, he could never afterwards see a wheelbarrow without jumping in and looking round expectantly for some one to come and wheel it.

Whether it was this youthful experience that gave him a taste for artificial locomotion, I do not know. But I have never known a dog with such a passion for trains and cabs. He loves the Underground Railway. He sniffs its sooty portals from afar, and will hurry on and tear down the steps and get into the first train he sees if one is not on one's guard. If he had his way he would take a ticket every time he passed a station, and spend his time going round and round the Inner Circle. He likes cabs, and especially hansoms—possibly because he has a better view from the seat of the latter than from the floor of a "four-wheeler." Indeed, it is extremely difficult to prevent him taking a hansom if he sees an empty one conveniently drawn up at the pavement.

On one occasion he caused me considerable embarrassment by this predilection. I had taken him out shopping in London one hot afternoon, and

we were about to cross Piccadilly Circus, when a loitering hansom drew up at the pavement, and scanned the crowd for a fare. Pan looked at it, and then round at me.

"Let us take this hansom," his eyes said plainly, "I am so tired of padding along the pavement." I shook my head at him, "No, Pan, not yet."

He seemed, however, to think I must yield to his persuasion, for going up to the hansom he put a black paw on the step and looked round at me again. Before I could answer he had jumped in, seated himself on the seat, and was looking encouragingly at me as I stood on the pavement. If there had been no spectators I might have yielded. But three crossing-sweepers and two flower-girls had noticed the incident and were standing laughing at us. The cabman, too, looked down through the hole at the top at Pan seated on the seat, and said, "I say, I shall have to *charge* you!"

I felt that my position was extremely ridiculous, and that I must assert myself. I put on my most peremptory manner, and, trying to look dignified, stood at the edge of the pavement and exhorted him in my sternest voice to come out at once. For a minute or two I feared he was going to defy me. Then he thought better of it, and leapt out. "It was only a joke," he said, with a characteristic toss

of his black head, as he gave my hand a lick. And he trotted home docile and decorous.

Though he likes driving, like all dogs he delights in a walk. He has the sheep-dog's collecting instinct, and likes his party to keep together. Nothing worries him more than for people to separate off into couples. He spends his time rushing backwards and forwards between the foremost and the hindmost couple to see that no one is missing. If, however, one of the party is without a partner, he will attach himself to the lonely one and walk devotedly at his heels.

I have a vision of him on a certain walking tour accompanying the "odd man" with assiduity, and especially of his dusty "puds," fringed with black, as seen from behind, in his efforts to keep step.

XL

THE BAND OF MERCY SHOW

It had always been deplored by the family that Betty, the tailless sheep dog, had never been exhibited at a show. The fact was, there had never been a dog show in the neighbourhood of Betty's home. And the thought of Betty going up to London and spending three whole days on a bench in the Agricultural Hall, amid a pandemonium of yelps and howls, could not be entertained for a moment. But when it was found that the Band of Mercy was going to hold a show quite close, in some private grounds about a mile off, it was felt by all the family that the time had come for Betty to make her *début*.

Now the Band of Mercy is (as the children explained) the society for being kind to animals. And kindness to animals is encouraged by the practical means of holding shows at which prizes are given for the best kept, best conditioned, and

generally speaking best treated pet animals, quite irrespective of pedigree or breeding. In fact, at the Band of Mercy Show, the humblest cur may compete with the haughtiest aristocrat, and defeat him, provided he can prove by his appearance and demeanour that he is in good condition and has been well treated—which, as cats and dogs would assure you, is the only system on which animal shows ought ever to be conducted.

Before entering Betty's name for exhibition, it was necessary that the family should enrol themselves as members of the Band of Mercy. This they proceeded to do, and were told that, though she might be exhibited, Betty would not be eligible for a prize —her owners having joined the society too recently. This was rather a blow. A family council was held, however, at which it was agreed that it was as well that Betty could not win a prize, for she certainly would have won them all, which would be hard on the other animals; but that all the same she must go to the show and be exhibited as an example of what a dog should look like. And, in order that she should not be too lonely, Jenny, the Dandy Dinmont, must go too. The pair would be an ornament to the show; for, in addition to immaculate pedigrees (which did not count), they were in beautiful condition, and any one could see

at a glance that they were well treated, not to say spoilt.

It was probably owing to this latter qualification that it took the family two whole days to get them ready for the show. Betty must be washed in order that her shirt-front might shine its whitest, and in order that Jenny's coat should look as silky as possible, she must have a thorough combing. For though, owing to a strictly vegetable diet and an open air life, their coats were beautifully clean, you can't be too particular when it is a question of setting an example.

It takes four people to give Betty a tub. One to stroke her head and talk to her about rabbits and bones, one to hold her, one to scrub, and one to "field"—that is, to stand at some little distance armed with towels and sheets ready to catch her, if, yielding to a sudden impulse, she leaps out of the bath and tears down the garden and rolls in the dust. The tubbing takes place out of doors on a little grass plot near the back door, and Betty, like other people of importance, has her own bath—a zinc affair, in shape like a nursery bath, which was purchased expressly for her at the village ironmonger's.

While in the bath Betty suffers from the deepest depression. She gazes at the sky with the air of a martyr, and occasionally gives vent to a low wail

of misery. But when she is taken out she is liable to a reaction which takes the form of an ungovernable fit of high spirits. As a rule, the evil consequences of this are guarded against by holding her firmly till she has been dried sufficiently to prevent dust sticking to her. But on this occasion (possibly because, in view of the show, her shirt-front had been scrubbed harder and longer than usual with the stable brush), in spite of all precautions, she escaped as soon as she felt the ground beneath her feet, and with the whole family (waving towels and scrubbing brushes) in pursuit, tore off down the garden as hard as she could go, and in spite of the shrieks of the family, and quite regardless of her white shirt-front (which was quite spoilt and had to be done again), had a good roll in the dust.

The combing of Jenny, though not quite so exciting as the washing of Betty, was even more arduous. Her silky hair, not having been combed for some months, was in a terrible tangle. For Jenny, who is an independent little person, and comes and goes as she pleases, elects to spend most of her time rabbit-hunting in the heather, or ratting in the barn. Consequently, though she is a clean little creature, she is, as far as tidiness goes, seldom fit to be seen.

For the two days preceding the show the dogs had what they would have probably described as a horrible time, enough possibly to have disqualified them for prizes had they been eligible. They were called in and scolded if they indulged in the most harmless romps. They were not even allowed to dig holes or roll in the heather. In fact, they were not allowed to do a single thing. For, if you mayn't dig a hole or roll in the heather, what may you do? they would like to know. Finally, on the day of the show, after a last brushing, they were tied up at the foot of the staircase, that they might have no opportunity of getting into more mischief. This had a quieting, not to say depressing effect on their spirits. They seemed to feel that something was going to happen, and to wish they knew what. Betty looked depressed and nervous, Jenny anxious and inquiring, and both watched every one who went up-stairs as if they expected an explanation.

They grew more depressed as the day wore on. While they were tied to the banisters, other preparations were going on. The animals to be exhibited were as far as possible to be decorated with flowers, and there was a great discussion as to what Betty and Jenny should wear. Finally, it was decided that Betty, who has a dignified bearing, in spite of occasional outbursts of hilarity, should wear

mauve rhododendrons, and that blue larkspurs and white daisies would be more becoming to Jenny's piquant personality. So two long wreaths were forthwith made, one of mauve rhododendrons and one of larkspurs and daisies.

The show was held at half-past five o'clock, in order that those of the villagers that were at work might be able to attend. At a quarter to five Betty and Jenny were released from the banisters, and, led by two members of the family, who also carried baskets with the decorations, started off along the road. The walk, which, owing to their being led on chains, might have been considered dull, was rendered interesting by the fact that all along the road were other dogs on chains, also going to the show. And not only dogs. Ponies and donkeys and even goats were also being led along, while cats and rabbits and poultry were being trundled along in wheelbarrows.

The scene of the show was a charming spot—all heather and pines. The cats and dogs were chained to little fir-trees on either side of a long path, and the ponies and donkeys, looking very pretty with their flower decorations, stood in groups under the larger trees.

Betty's and Jenny's depression gave way to excite-

ment when they arrived on the scene. They were so much interested in the sights and smells that it was very difficult to get them to stand still to have their wreaths put on. Betty, whose wreath was put once round her neck and then round her waist, submitted with obvious impatience, and then signified her contempt of the proceeding by rolling and completely spoiling it. Jenny, whose wreath was put on her head, was so much interested in the other animals, that she did not care whether she had a wreath on or not, and looked sublimely unconscious of the comic and dissipated appearance she presented when five minutes after the wreath was put on, it fell all on one side.

Excitement rose to a climax when the village band arrived, and planting itself in the midst of the dogs began to play festive tunes. Then with the yelping and yapping that had been going on were mingled dismal howls. A beautiful collie that occupied the next fir-tree to Betty put its head in the air and sent up one after the other the most heart-rending wails.

Both dogs seemed to find the prize-giving the most exciting part of the show. Jenny, who is a very conversational dog, talked and growled the whole time. And Betty interrupted the speeches

with barking remarks. "I hope the fact of my not being considered eligible for a prize," I took her remarks to mean, "because we only joined the society yesterday, will be a lesson to every one who has dogs, to join the Band of Mercy *at once*."

XLI

TOM TUG MAKES HIS BOW

WHEN I came home from the dog show and told Tom Tug that I had seen two hundred and fifty bull-dogs, but that none were as beautiful as he, he made me his deepest bow. He prostrated himself on his two front paws till all his skin slipped up round his neck in great folds, and made a sort of collar.

Making his bow is Tom Tug's one and only trick. He invented it himself as a means of expressing his feelings on occasions when a mere wag of the tail might be considered inadequate. It is his most effusive way of greeting one the first thing in the morning, his deepest expression of gratitude for any especially good tit-bit, and his most gracious manner of showing his appreciation of a caress or a compliment.

Common courtesy seems to demand that one



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should acknowledge Tom's bow, and I invariably meet it with a pat on the head, and an encouraging "Good dog!" But I have reason to believe that it does not always meet with the same appreciation. Indeed, only this morning, I saw it fall lamentably flat.

The dogs' morning toilet consists of having their faces washed by William, and their coats brushed. The schipperke detests the operation. Tom Tug as a rule submits to it with characteristic indifference. This morning, on hearing him somewhat peremptorily called, I looked out of my bedroom window and saw William waiting in the yard with the basin and sponge and whistling to Tom. In a few minutes Tom Tug emerged lazily from the house, apparently in no mood to have his face washed. He sniffed the morning air, and then looked at William. Then he looked round to see if there was any way of escape, and apparently seeing none, he walked slowly up to William, and playing his last card, made a deep bow. Of course I saw at once what he meant. It was his way of saying, "Please let us forego this operation. I really don't think I can stand having my face washed this morning." For answer William seized him by the collar, and proceeded, rather roughly, I thought, to scrub his face with the sponge.

Tom Tug is nothing if not philosophical. Once



he feels a thing has to be endured, he submits to it with a fairly good grace. He shut his eyes and screwed up his nose, and let William scrub his face without a struggle. A note of black was added to the picture by the schipperke, who, seated close to William, awaited his turn with his nose in the air and his ears back, looking the picture of abject misery.

After he had acknowledged my compliment about the dog show, Tom Tug proceeded to sniff at me in rather a suspicious manner, as if he thought there was something behind my specious words; till I began to wonder whether he suspected the fact that my allegiance to him had wavered in the course of my visit to the dog show. As a matter of fact, I had entirely lost my heart to one of the bull-dogs at the show, so much so that for the time being I almost forgot Tom Tug's existence.

He was a very dark brindle about a year old, with most engaging manners. He attracted my attention and won my heart at the same time by making me a deep bow, precisely after the manner of Tom Tug, as I passed.

"Do stop and talk to me," it said, "I am so *bored* I don't know what to do." Of course I stopped at once. Indeed, during the hour I spent at the dog show I visited that bull-dog on an average every five

minutes. Our conversation was for the most part inarticulate. It consisted of pats and nibbles and licks and paws, and occasional tugs of war over a straw.

Though I was much attracted by him I doubt if I should have remembered him as anything more than a particularly nice bull-dog, if an episode had not occurred that engraved his dark brindle form and brown eyes indelibly on my mind. A man came to see a small white bull-dog in the next cage. He produced a newspaper parcel, and putting it down on the bench, proceeded to undo it. It was full of slices of beef, which he began to tear into little pieces and give to the bull-dog. He had got as far as this before my brindled friend—whose name, by the bye, was "Black Watch"—noticed that there was anything unusual going on. Then he suddenly became aware of a smell of beef in the air, and turning round, saw what was happening. He promptly dropped the straw with which he had been playing, and going close to the wire partition, gazed steadfastly through at the sumptuous repast, turning his head slightly on one side by way of better sampling the contents of the parcel, and sniffing curiously to see if it was beef or mutton. As the man proceeded to tear up one slice after another, giving it in pieces to the other bull-dog as fast as he

could eat it, an anxious look began to come over the brindled fellow's face.

I could see quite well what he was thinking. "There'll be none left for me if he gives him much more. I wish he'd hurry up and come on." When the man, having given the white bull-dog about half the contents of the parcel, proceeded to wrap up the rest, I could see that Black Watch was distinctly relieved. He got up on his front legs (he had been seated before), so as to be in readiness. And he watched the man's movements with eager anticipation. To his utter surprise and bewilderment the man put the parcel of beef into his pocket, and walking briskly past his cage, went rapidly down the hall, and disappeared in the crowd.

For a moment Black Watch was so surprised that he failed to take in the situation. He simply could not understand that the man had passed him over on purpose. He went as far forward as his chain would allow him, and strained his eyes in the direction in which the man had gone, as if he thought he must come back. Then he turned and sniffed through the bars, to see whether he could possibly have made a mistake, and it had not been beef after all. A delicious beefy odour in the air, and the look of stodgy content of the small white bull-dog left no doubt that it had been beef.

Gradually a look of blank disappointment came over his face, which gave way by degrees to one of hopeless gloom. I have seen such a look in the face of a school-boy, who, having expected a watch for a Christmas-box, had received instead a book he already possessed. Both expressed the realization of the absolute flatness of life. Of course I did my best to comfort my brindled friend, but I felt it was a rather hopeless task. I told him it was not such nice beef as he had imagined—rather poor stuff, indeed—and that I really did not think he would have cared about it. He looked me mournfully in the eyes, and said he had both seen and smelt it, and he had seldom seen or smelt beef more to his fancy. Then I talked to him about bones. I told him I was quite sure he would find a splendid bone, with all the meat left on, waiting for him when he got home. This cheered him up so far that he consented to nibble my finger again. But the effect was only temporary. When I left him he was gazing at vacancy in a depressed sort of way, and obviously thinking of the irony of life.

I talked to him about bones because I felt that if his resemblance to Tom Tug extended beyond making his bow—and I felt sure from what I saw of him that it did—he would count slices of beef as nothing compared with bones.



Tom Tug's love of bones amounts to a passion, and has led on more than one occasion to a display of intelligence, reasoning power, and diplomacy which I doubt that we should otherwise have credited him with. For months he had succeeded in providing himself every Saturday morning with a leg-of-mutton bone, the source of which our utmost ingenuity and watchfulness had not enabled us to discover. It was some time before we discovered that its source was not our own larder. If you are not an anatomist, one bone looks to you very much like another. My attention was called to it by the fact that during the summer, when lamb was in season, the bone had usually a furry appendage, and on occasions when I knew we had had no lamb. My attention once attracted, I very soon noticed that the bone appeared regularly once a week, on Saturday morning. Consideration of the subject led to the conclusion that the bone was not from our larder, but from another. I proceeded to watch Tom, but without the smallest success. While I watched, one would have thought such a thing as a bone never entered his head. As soon as I withdrew my supervision he apparently seized the opportunity. For the next scene (reminding one in its rapidity of the sudden change that occurs when the cinematograph makes a jump) was Tom Tug gnawing the bone on

the lawn. One Saturday, when he had taken advantage of my going in to see if the letters had come to produce the bone, I reproached him with deceit. He looked up at me from under his heavy brow with a half-humorous expression as he gnawed the bone. Then, getting up lazily, he dropped the bone for a minute, and, coming up to me, made me his most elaborate bow.

THE END



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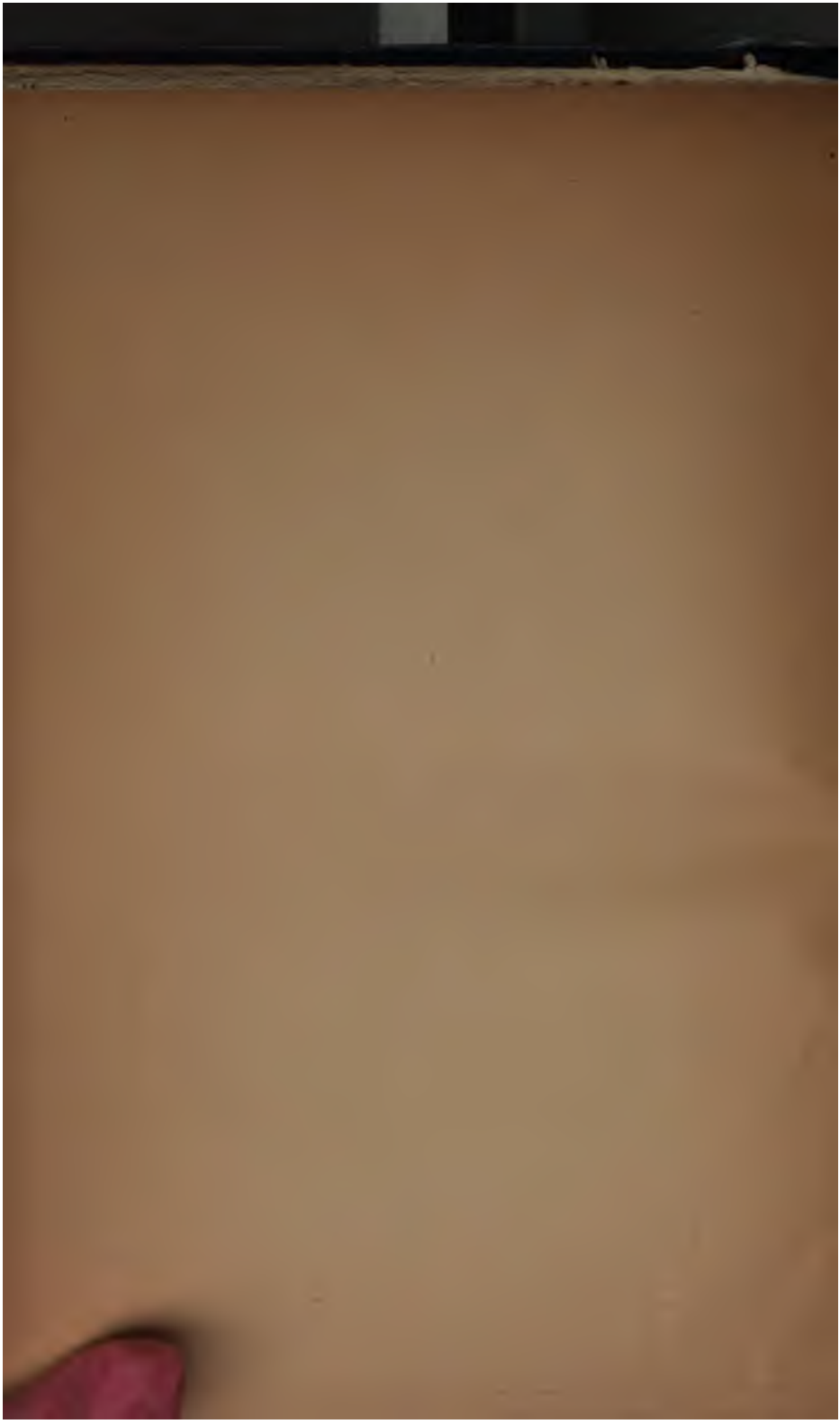
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